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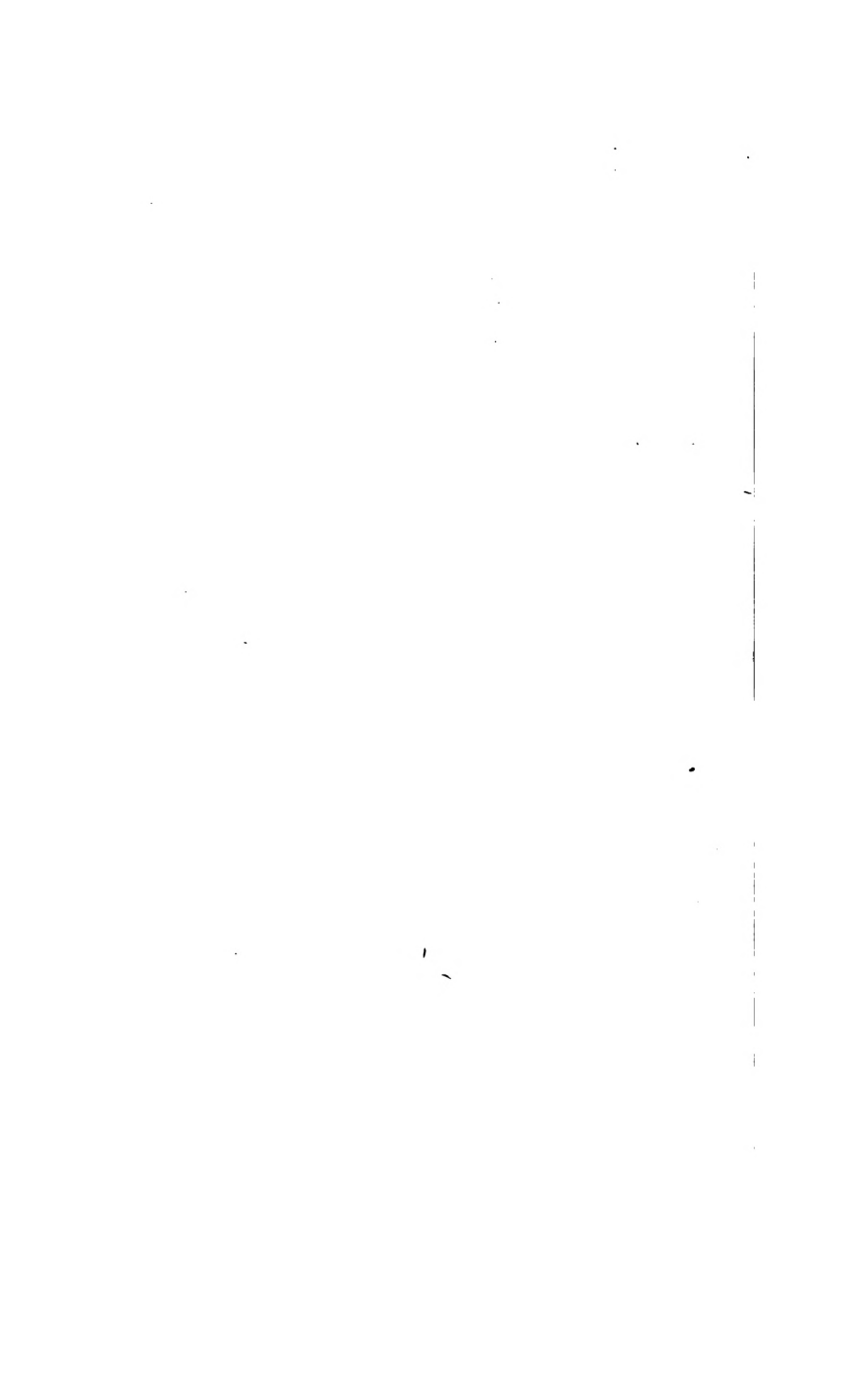
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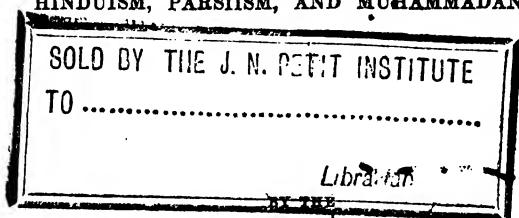




LETTERS TO INDIAN YOUTH
ON THE
EVIDENCES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

WITH A BRIEF
EXAMINATION OF THE EVIDENCES

OF
HINDUISM, PARSÍISM, AND MUHAMMADANISM.



REV. J. MURRAY MITCHELL, A.M.

THIRD EDITION.

BOMBAY:
THOMAS GRAHAM, PRINTER.

1857.

Printed for the Bombay Tract and Book Society.

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

VERY few words will be required to explain the character and object of these "Letters." Although many excellent works on the Christian Evidences exist in the English language, yet there is perhaps none that can be considered well suited to the wants of Native youth. In the following pages the attempt has been made to present this all-important subject to the educated mind of India in a form at once simple and attractive—the reasonings and illustrations having, as far as possible, an Oriental reference.

Utility has been aimed at, rather than novelty. The writer has never scrupled to employ the argument that seemed best to answer his purpose, whether it was original or not. On the Christian Evidences he has in particular consulted the works of Paley, Chalmers, Sumner, Hartwell Horne, President Hopkins (of America), and T. Erskine. With regard to the Oriental systems of religion he has been careful, in questions that could admit of any doubt, to append the names of the authorities relied on.

He trusts that the spirit in which the work is written, is in harmony with that love which pervades the religion whose claims are here unfolded. Polemical discussion has, of course, been unavoidable; but he trusts that the tone of the argument, however earnest, is never acrimonious.

May ^{HE}HE, who can work by the weakest as well as by the mightiest instruments, vouchsafe His enriching blessing on this effort to advance His glory, and make it the means of

leading many of the youth of India to the humble and reverential study of the volume of Revelation,—and thus may many a wandering and weary spirit find its needed rest in Jesus Christ, the Crucified—the only Redeemer of sinful man!

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE sale of the first edition of this little work was more rapid than the writer had anticipated; and in little more than a year the impression was all disposed of. The fact seems to afford a cheering indication that the momentous subject of which it treats, awakens no small degree of interest among the youth of India. The writer regrets that the re-issue has been unavoidably delayed by sickness and other causes. The present edition has for the most part been printed during his absence from Bombay; and he has been greatly indebted to the ever ready and valuable assistance of the Rev. R. Nesbit, in carrying it through the press.

The work has been carefully revised throughout, and several important additions have been made. This is especially the case in the chapter on Hinduism, which now contains a view of Primitive Hinduism, and of Vedantism, as well as of the popular system.

During the last few years the progress made in pressing the august disclosures and claims of Revelation on the mind and heart of India has been great and cheering. In so far as this little book may be fitted to aid in this great and holy work, may He to whom the consecration of great and small alike is due, graciously accept the offering now cast into His treasury.

Bombay, 3rd December, 1852.

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION.

IN the preparation of a third edition of these Letters, the whole of the work has been carefully revised.

A few things have been omitted; and a good many additions have been made. The additional matter is chiefly embodied in Notes added at the end of several of the Letters.

The writer has done his best to make this little book still more suitable to the youthful mind of India. To render it as accessible as possible the Bombay Tract and Book Society have considerably reduced the price.

The writer is cheered to think that these Letters have been already useful; and his earnest prayer is that God may bless the effort to render them still more so.

30th December, 1856.

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LETTERS TO INDIAN YOUTH

ON

THE EVIDENCES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

LETTER I.

INTRODUCTION. THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS
INQUIRY.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

IN compliance with your desire I take up my pen to express in the form of letters some thoughts on the truth of the Christian Religion. It is with very great pleasure I commence this correspondence. The state of things in Bombay in regard to religion fills my mind, as it fills the mind of many others, with anxiety and sorrow. We see in this city a large and continually increasing number of young Natives who are zealously engaged in the pursuit of learning, and many of whom have already made considerable progress in not a few of the branches of a liberal education. The attention devoted to the study of English is every day increasing. A large number of young Maráthí Bráhmans and of Pársís are studying our language, and a very considerable proportion of the other castes is following their example. Knowledge is rapidly spreading; European arts and sciences are extending themselves,—European ideas are rapidly supplanting opinions that have been handed down unquestioned for thousands of years. The tide is flowing; and

the current of new thoughts that is setting in cannot be turned back, but will carry away all that attempts to arrest its progress.

It is very pleasing to note the zeal with which many of the youth of India have entered on various branches of study; and the attainments which they have actually made are highly creditable to them. We may hope that a sincere love of knowledge is extensively diffused among Native youth. No feeling can be nobler than the love of truth; no occupation can be nobler than the search for truth, and the communication of truth to others. It is a pleasing thing, then, to hope that many of the youth of India are at present diligently engaged in the search after truth in the various branches of study which occupy their attention.

But there is unquestionably one subject which enters far less into the consideration of Indian youth than its supreme importance demands. That subject is Religion.

It has often been remarked that the island of Bombay exhibits an extraordinary diversity of races, which are distinguished from each other by their peculiar manners, and often by their peculiar complexions and costumes. What an exceedingly animated scene does the Esplanade present every evening about sunset, when it is crowded with people from almost every country of Asia and from various parts of Europe and Africa, clad, as they generally are, in garments of the most brilliant hues and picturesque forms which are striking in themselves and rendered doubly so by their mutual contrasts. A diversity of this kind is pleasing to the eye, nor does it in the least degree pain the reflecting mind. By all means, let the Arab and the Persian, the Malay and the Chinese, the Asiatic and the European, each retain, if he desires it, the peculiar dress and manners of his country; at all events, no harm is done by the variety. But there is another diversity, which affects us with very

Diversity
of races in
Bombay.

different feelings—I mean, the immense diversity in religious belief and religious practice which prevails around

us. In the small island of Bombay itself, Diversity of Religions in Bombay. we have the four great distinctions of Christians, Musalmáns, Hindus, and Pársís, besides others that are of less importance. The differences that obtain among the religious systems now mentioned are, if possible, still greater than the remarkable dissimilarities in complexion, costume and language, that exist among the various races congregated in our city.

I have just said, my young friend, that such wide differences in religion are deeply to be lamented. You are a Hindu; still, I expect you will agree with me in the opinion. It is true the general belief of the Hindus is that Almighty God has allotted various religions to the various races of men, and that each race can best secure the Divine favour by practising its own system. But no well educated Hindu can entertain such a sentiment. The moral qualities of things in no degree depend on climate or locality; they are fixed and immutable,—they are in India what they are in England. The attributes of the Supreme Being are eternally the same; His will remains unchanged yesterday, to-day, and for ever; the dispositions which He regards with complacency, and the worship which He accepts, are the same in all times and places. But the four grand religious systems which prevail in Western India, viz. Christianity, Hinduism, Muhammadanism and Pársiism, are, in many points, irreconcilably opposed to each other. What is permitted by one of these systems is often forbidden by the rest; what is enjoined by some as a means of securing the Divine approval, is condemned by others as fitted to call down the Divine vengeance. It is wholly impossible that all these conflicting systems can be true. If some of us have embraced the truth, others must be trusting to falsehood and delusion.

Now, it is a most melancholy thing that error should

exist in connexion with a subject like Religion. For Re-

Religion in-
finitely im-
portant.

ligion is infinitely the highest and most important of all subjects. Think for a moment what it treats of. Religion speaks to us of God—His character—His will ; it speaks of the nature of man—our relation to God—our duty in life—and of that mysterious world which awaits us when this life shall have passed away for ever. Our existence in this world is limited to a few short years ; and it is of unspeakable importance for us to know what shall succeed the present life, and in what manner we may best be prepared for the solemn change which takes place at death. What does our Maker demand of us ? and how can we secure His favour ? These are questions which every reflecting man will acknowledge to be far more weighty and significant than any that are connected merely with worldly things. Scientific inquiry is interesting, and, in its place, important ; but religious inquiry is unspeakably more momentous.

Religion, then, is infinitely important. But many forget this. Most men occupy themselves only with worldly things ; they are busied only about their temporal wants. They think far more of the desires of the body, than of the necessities of the soul. Few will deny in words that religion is important ; but countless multitudes act as if it were utterly unimportant. The corrupt passions of human nature are exceedingly strong, and, in cases innumerable, their tumultuous violence drowns the voice of reason and conscience. Very many who would shudder at being called Atheists, yet lead a life of practical Atheism ;—they seldom or never think of God.

• Now, what is the chief danger that lies in the way of the educated youth of Bombay ? It is this very forgetfulness of Religion of which I have been speaking.

I think you will agree with me in saying that the state of Religion among the educated youth of Bombay may be described as follows. Generally speaking, they are aware of most of

State of Re-
ligion among
Indian youth.

the great differences that exist among the various systems of religion prevalent around them. They will also pretty generally admit that only one of these systems can be true. They may farther admit, when the question is pressed upon them, that it is their duty to compare the different forms of religion, in order that they may discover which one is supported by satisfactory evidence. But here a difference comes in between the young men who are educated at Missionary Institutions, and those who are educated at Institutions in which no attention is paid to the study of religion. Young men who have studied for four or five years at Missionary Institutions, have been familiarized with the all-important subject of Religion, and they have almost invariably a conviction that Christianity is a Revelation from God. On the other hand, young men educated at those seminaries from which the study of religion is unhappily banished, have very ill-defined notions on the whole subject. The educated Pársí may perhaps half believe Pársism to be true ; but he only half believes it. The educated Hindu may half believe Hinduism ; but he only half believes it. Some of these young men are avowed sceptics, that is, they are not convinced either that man requires, or that God has given, any Revelation at all. Some of them will admit that if any religion be indeed a revelation from God, it probably must be Christianity, as that is the faith of the most highly civilized and intellectual nations. A common opinion among these young men is this, that all religions have something good in them, and that all have also something bad. But in fact, the minds of young men educated in seminaries from which the study of religion is excluded, are in a state of exceeding confusion and uncertainty on the whole subject, scarcely knowing what to admit, and what to deny. This is truly a melancholy state of things.

On the whole, I fear it must be admitted in general that the educated youth of Bombay banish the subject of Reli-

gion as far as possible from their thoughts. This is true even of the young men educated at Missionary Institutions as well as those trained in non-religious Institutions.

The students in Missionary Schools are, indeed, well acquainted with the character and claims of Christianity, and seldom can they seriously deny the purity of the one or the validity of the other. But they feel that, if Christianity is true, they themselves are in a false position. For Christianity forbids them to remain in heathenism ; she commands them to repent, to believe in Christ, to be baptized, and enter the Christian Church. This they are not prepared to do. They know it to be their duty ; but they shrink from performing the duty. They are unable to make the sacrifice that Christianity asks. Her commands are painful ; it is irksome to think of them,—and therefore, they endeavour to forget them. If this is true of most of the students even in Missionary Institutions, we need not wonder that those of other seminaries in which no attention is paid to religion, should in general entirely dismiss the subject from their thoughts.

But this conduct is at once highly sinful and highly dangerous. Earnestly do I hope that you, my young friend, will pursue a different course. You were created to glorify God.

Your first and highest duty is to seek

Him—to inquire what you are to believe respecting Him, and what duties He commands you to perform. Neglect this, and you are most criminal. Inattention to religion would be exceedingly sinful and perilous, even if you were assured that your life would be protracted to a thousand years ; but how great the folly, and how fearfully perilous the delay, when your life may terminate this very hour ! Again and again have we been deeply distressed by the sudden death of young Natives, who were amiable and interesting, but who had shunned to think of the claims of God and religion. I have one very talented young man particularly

Neglect of Religion highly
sinful and dangerous.

in my eye at this moment, who had often expressed his determination to attend to the solemn inquiry and examine the evidences of Christianity, *as soon as he could find time*. That time never came. Death arrived before the expected leisure. Who knows whether you who now read these lines, may not suddenly be seized by some of the many deadly maladies that lie in wait for human beings? Ere to-morrow's sun arise, your corpse may be hurried to the funeral pile, some ceremonies performed over you, the flames kindled, and in a few minutes your body be a heap of ashes! Alas! where then will be the undying spirit? It will have returned to its righteous Judge, to answer for the deeds done in the body—for opportunities neglected—warnings unheeded—and the commands of God despised.

Let me earnestly entreat you to think on these things. Your Maker has given you faculties that raise you far above the inferior animals. He has endowed you with Reason and Conscience. Use them. Reflect. Listen to the voice of conscience testifying that your highest duty is to seek God. Seek truth in all things and especially seek it in Religion. Seek it, and embrace it. Cherish it more than life. And may God himself direct and bless you in all your inquiries!

I am,

Your sincere friend.

LETTER II.

INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY OF PRAYER. REVELATION
DEFINED. ITS NECESSITY. EXTERNAL AND INTER-
NAL EVIDENCE.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

I shall now take it for granted that you admit the infinite
Necessity of importance of the inquiry, *Which is the true*
Prayer. *Religion*,—and that you desire honestly and
earnestly to attend to the considerations which may be
brought forward on the subject. Before entering, how-
ever, on that inquiry, there is still one thing which I must
solemnly press on your attention. You believe in the
existence and superintending providence of a Supreme
Being, “whose tender mercies are over all His works,”
and who will assuredly look with complacency on every
pure and elevated aspiration of soul in the creatures He
has formed. You acknowledge the propriety of prayer
being offered to such a Being. Prayer is suitable and
necessary even in the ordinary affairs of life; and it is es-
pecially important when we are occupied with matters of
moment that closely concern our happiness. In under-
taking, then, an inquiry like the present, prayer is alto-
gether indispensable. Go with a simple, child-like heart to
God. Entreat Him to guide you in your inquiries. Be-
seech Him to grant you a humble, candid, teachable mind.
Ask Him to remove all prejudice of understanding and
all hardness of heart. Plead that you may not only know
the truth, but love it,—may meekly receive, and honestly
profess it.

I trust, my young friend, you feel the importance of all this. Do not fall into that practical Atheism of which I spoke in my first letter. One thing is certain,—unless you do, both at the commencement and during the whole continuance of your religious inquiries, earnestly plead for the blessing of God, there is not the shadow of a reason to hope that you will ever come to the knowledge of the truth. Unless you are willing and anxious to implore Almighty God to give you His enlightening grace, you may spare yourself the trouble of reading these letters; they cannot possibly do you any good. I must own it is quite beyond my power to impart any spiritual benefit to a man who will not pray; and I tell you plainly beforehand, that, if you do not read these letters with prayer, you will only scoff at them. Again, then, I would earnestly entreat you, pray. God will assuredly hear you, if you do so. “Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find.”

IS THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION A REVELATION FROM GOD? That is the important question which we must now endeavour to answer.

Let us first attend to the meaning of the word *Revelation*. It originally signifies *unveiling, uncovering, or making known*. In this sense God might be said to reveal or make Himself known in various ways. He does so in the works of nature around us; He does so in the constitution of the human mind. We cannot look, for example, on the sun, without being convinced that it must have had an intelligent and powerful author. We cannot contemplate truth or falsehood, without feeling that the one is pleasing, and the other displeasing, to God. I say, we *might* apply the word *Revelation* to the intimations of the Divine existence, character and will, which are thus obtained; but, in fact, the word is seldom or never so used. When we speak of any religious system as being revealed by God, we do not refer to that manifestation of Himself which God makes in human

Reason and Conscience, and in the works of Creation. By Revelation we mean something beyond this. We mean by it that God, in some supernatural way, makes Himself known to His creatures. Every Hindu, Muhammadan and Pársi* will readily comprehend this meaning of Revelation. The Muhammadan term *ihám* has pretty nearly the same signification; and the Muhammadan believes that the Law, the Psalms, the Gospel, and the Kurán were all thus *revealed* by God. The Hindu holds that the Vedas and Shástras contain the Revelation which God has made to the Hindus. The Pársi believes the Zendavestá to be a Revelation. The book which is commonly known by the name of the Bible, the Christian believes to contain an infallible Revelation of the will of God.

Many writers have shewn at great length the necessity and the probability of a Divine Revelation being given. I shall not at present dwell on this subject; some thoughts as to the exceeding desirableness of the blessing may fall more naturally under consideration in a future letter. In the meantime, it will be a sufficient demonstration of the necessity of Divine instruction being imparted, if we point to the immense and melancholy differences on religion that exist even in our own city. Amid this endless diversity, and doubt, and conflict, how precious should be any authoritative declaration of God's will—how unspeakably welcome to all humble and teachable hearts! The best and greatest of the philosophers of Greece longed for such a message from above; and the aid which the gifted Plato sighed for, surely the youth of India may not reasonably or safely disregard.*

* There are several passages in Plato that speak of the need of a Divine Revelation. Sometimes he seems to refer to an original Revelation which had partly been handed down by tradition. Sometimes he expresses a desire for a Revelation still future. See most of these passages quoted in Clarke's Boyle Lectures on the Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion, Prop. VII. The following interesting

On the subject of Revelation, it is of consequence to observe that Christians, Muhammadans, Hindus, and Pársís are all to a certain extent of one mind. All of them maintain the same opinion against the infidel or deist. "Man needs no Revelation from heaven," says the infidel. "He does need a Revelation from heaven," reply, with one voice, Christians, Muhammadans, Hindus, and Pársís. "God has actually given no Revelation," says the infidel. "He has given a Revelation," exclaim the followers of all these four religions. So far, then, they are agreed; and this agreement is exceedingly important. How earnestly is it to be desired that they might also be of one mind on a third point, viz. as to the volume which actually contains this greatly needed and ardently desired expression of the Divine will! Let Christians, Muhammadans, Hindus, and Pársís frankly, but kindly, state their mutual differences of sentiment, and see whether they cannot assist each other in the search after the true Revelation. There need, surely, be no quarrelling on such a matter. If we discuss it in a harsh polemical spirit, we shall greatly err. Let each man strive not to vanquish an enemy, but to help a brother.

The arguments that may be brought forward to shew that the Bible contains a Divine Revelation, are exceedingly numerous. I do not wish

Plan of this
Work.

passage is in Plato's Phædo. "To discover the certain truth about these things [i. e. the immortality of the soul &c.] is, in this life, either impossible or most difficult. Still, to fail of diligently inquiring into them, or to stop short before we have carried the inquiry as far as we can, would be the mark of a most ignoble spirit. We must then by all means do one or other of two things. Either, we must learn (from others), or find out, the truth; or, if that be impossible, then we must take the best and surest of human reasonings, and embarking on that, as on a frail raft, sail over life's perilous ocean; UNLESS ONE WERE ABLE TO PERFORM THE VOYAGE WITH MORE CERTAINTY AND LESS PERIL UPON SOME Surer MODE OF TRANSPORT, SUCH AS A DIVINE REVELATION.

Nearly all the later Platonist and Pythagorean philosophers admitted the necessity of Divine Revelation. See on this subject Leland's Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation, part i. chap. xxi.

to state the whole of these;—I am desirous of making these letters present a satisfactory view of the argument, but at the same time a short and simple view. A mathematical proposition may frequently be demonstrated in five or six different ways, but the mathematician is satisfied with one complete demonstration. In like manner, I shall be satisfied if I can give you one convincing chain of reasoning in support of the truth of Christianity. My object is, not to let you see all that can be said on the subject, but to exhibit in a brief compass an argument that ought to command your assent. If you desire to have fuller and more elaborate statements you can afterwards turn to some of the many elaborate works in which the question is discussed.

We may first attend to the different *classes* or *kinds* of argument which have been brought forward to establish the truth of Christian Religion. An illustration will make this matter plain.

Different
classes of
arguments.

Suppose a young man in Bombay receives an important message, which purports to have come from his father in a distant village. In this case, the young man has two ways of judging whether the message has really come from his father or not. In the first place, he may examine the character of the men who have brought the message. He inquires whether they are honest, well-informed, acquainted with his father and the locality from which they say they have come, and so on; and from the decision which he forms as to the character of the messengers, he judges of the genuineness of the message. Or, in the second place, the young man may examine the message itself, and see whether it corresponds with what he already knows respecting his father, his character, employments, wishes, &c. Very probably, every young man in the circumstances which we have supposed, would carefully examine both the character of the messengers and the character of the message, before he finally decided as to the truth or falsehood of the information brought him. Suppose, for example, he

is told that his father is thought to be dying, and wishes him to give up his present employment in Bombay and return home. The young man, in that case, would doubtless ask whether any letter on the subject had arrived; and, if one was offered, he would carefully examine the hand-writing; he would observe whether the statements it contained regarding his family were correct. He would next question the messengers to see whether they really were acquainted with his father, his family, his village, and so forth,—and then, putting all these things together, he would decide whether he ought to go home or not.

We proceed in the same way, when we examine the evidences of a religion that professes to be a Revelation from God. Christianity is such a religion. Christianity is a message delivered to us by Jesus Christ and his Apostles; and the message purports to have come from heaven,—Jesus Christ and his Apostles declare they were sent by God. We may, therefore, either inquire into the character of the messengers, their opportunities of knowing, their honesty, and so on; or, we may ask whether the message which they deliver, is such a message as would probably come from God. From nature and our own mental constitution we already know something about God; consequently, we may compare the message brought to us by Christianity with the knowledge we already possess,—and see how far these two things correspond with each other.

If we proceed in the former way, we attend to the *External Evidence*; if in the latter, we attend to the *Internal Evidence*.*

Both of these branches of Evidence are important, and both ought to be carefully studied; but young inquirers should commence with the former, as being decidedly the less difficult of the two.

* The External Evidences may be subdivided into Historical, Miraculous, and Prophetical. There is also a third branch of the Evidence, viz. the Experimental.

For, in studying the External Evidence, our attention is directed to plain historical questions, on which it is as easy to obtain complete satisfaction as on any other historical facts. *Did Jesus Christ exist, and did he do what is asserted of him*—this, as an historical question, is precisely of the same kind as another, *Did Julius Cæsar exist, and did he do what is asserted of him?*—We must examine and determine the one historical question in the same manner as we examine and determine the other historical question.

We shall begin with the easier subject—an examination of the External Evidence of Christianity. I think it will be proved to your entire conviction that the facts recorded in the Bible are as firmly to be believed as the most undoubted historical events. We shall see that it is quite as certain that Jesus Christ lived and died in Judea at the time asserted by Christians, and did what is recorded of him, as it is that Julius Cæsar invaded Britain, or that Shivájí, the founder of the Maráthá kingdom, rose in arms against the Emperor Aurangzib.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

THE NEW TESTAMENT. ITS ANTIQUITY. ITS
GENUINENESS AND UNCORRUPTEDNESS.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

YOU are aware that the book which Christians receive as containing a Revelation from God, is commonly called the Bible. The Bible consists of two parts, viz. the Old Testament, which was originally written in the Hebrew language; and the New Testament, which was originally written in Greek. We might commence our inquiry by an examination either of the Old Testament or of the New. We may probably find it the simpler and more interesting way to take up the New Testament first.

When a volume is put into our hands that contains very important information, we naturally inquire in the first place: *Who wrote the book? and when, and where, did it first appear?* Christians speak of the New Testament as having been composed more than 1700 years ago; but, on so grave a question, it would not be right to be satisfied with mere hearsay. We require to know the grounds on which the opinion is based. What if the book was written only four or five hundred years ago? We want distinctly to see how it can be proved to be more than seventeen hundred years old.

Happily, this subject is involved in no difficulty. Any young Native who will give his attention to the argument, may perfectly well understand the question we are now to discuss.

I. The antiquity and genuineness of the New Testament are proved from the *Ancient Translations* of it that are still in existence.

Of course you are well aware of the fact that Missionaries in India have translated the Bible into many different languages—Maráthí, Gujaráti, Canarese, Hindustáni, &c. But it is not only of late years that Christians have been anxious that their sacred books should be rendered into various languages, and the knowledge of them communicated as widely as possible. At the time of the Reformation, in the sixteenth century, the illustrious Luther translated the Bible into the German language; and various other learned men rendered it into French, Spanish, English, Danish, and other European tongues. Nearly all the translations which are now in use throughout the Protestant churches in Europe date from the time of the Reformation, or shortly after. Of course, no one can imagine that the Bible has been composed since these translations were made.

But we have much more ancient versions of the Bible than any yet mentioned. We have versions into Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopic, Syriac, Latin, Gothic, Anglo-Saxon, and other languages. These were composed at various periods; but most of them are very old. For example, the Anglo-Saxon version was completed in the early part of the eighth century, that is, eleven hundred years ago. The Gothic was made in the end of the fourth century, that is, fifteen hundred years ago. The Armenian version was executed soon after the time when the Armenian nation was converted to Christianity, which event took place about the middle of the fourth century. The Ethiopic version was made before the middle of the fourth century. The Latin version was originally composed early in the second century, and was revised by the learned Jerome towards the conclusion of the fourth. In Syriac,

we possess two celebrated versions—one of which was executed, at the latest, early in the second century, or more probably in the end of the first, that is to say, before the year 100 after the birth of Christ,—or more than seventeen hundred years ago. Translations of the New Testament of a still more ancient date were not necessary; indeed, they were scarcely possible, as the various books of which it is composed were all written after the year 33, and some of them about the year 90. This brings us very near to the date of the earlier Syriac version.

Now, these various translations can be compared both with each other and with the original Greek. Of course they are not inspired. The ancient versions into Syriac, Latin, &c. are no more inspired than the modern ones into Maráthí, Gujarátí, &c. Not one of them is entirely free from error. The sense of the original has occasionally been imperfectly understood. But even when this is the case, we can generally see what the Greek text must have been from which the translation was made. Any man who is possessed of sufficient learning, on comparing the various translations, will discover 1st, that they well agree with each other; and 2ndly, that they must all have been made from the same original. * In fact these ancient versions of the New Testament agree as closely as the Maráthí, Gujarátí, Hindustání, and other versions which have been lately published by Missionaries in India, and which we know to have all been prepared from the same Greek text.

You easily perceive what all this demonstrates. In the first place, it establishes the *antiquity* of the New Testament. We have now traced the New Testament up to about the year of Christ 100. We might trace the various books composing the New Testament to still earlier dates; but this is not necessary.—In the next place, it proves its *genuineness*, or *uncorruptedness*, that it is to say, that it

is the same now, as it was when originally composed. No man can suppose that the various translations, after they had been made, could have been altered for the purpose of making them agree with each other. The Saxons in England, the Goths in Mœsia, the Abyssinians in Africa, the Armenians in the neighbourhood of Mount Ararat, the Syrians in Mesopotamia and Southern India &c. were all in possession of versions of the New Testament. Could these nations, then, ever have met together, for the purpose of revising and changing their respective versions, and making them all harmonize? The supposition is absurd. For many reasons, such a thing was utterly impossible. When they were once executed, the versions, in consequence of frequent transcription, would become somewhat more *unlike* each other than they were at first. But we find them still wonderfully *like* each other. This proves that they were all made from the same original. It proves also that neither the original nor the versions have sustained any serious change;—that is to say, it proves their genuineness and uncorruptedness.

II. In the second place, the antiquity and genuineness of the New Testament are proved from the *Ancient Manuscripts of it that are still in existence.*

Ancient Manuscripts.

- Since the art of printing was discovered in the fifteenth century, copies of the Bible have been multiplied in Europe by means of the press; but before the art of printing was known, books could be multiplied only by the slow process of transcription or copying with a pen. You have often seen manuscripts of Sanskrit and Maráthí works, and no doubt you are aware that the sacred books of the Hindus have begun to be printed only recently. Almost all the copies of the Vedas and Puránas that the Hindus have ever seen, are manuscripts. In like manner,

there exist throughout Europe and in various parts of Asia and Africa, manuscript copies of the Bible, that were written before the art of printing was invented. These manuscripts are exceedingly numerous. The learned men of Europe have examined between 600 and 700 manuscript copies of the New Testament in Greek. Some of

Alexand-
rian MS.

these are very ancient. There is one called the Alexandrian Manuscript, which is now preserved in the British Museum, London, and which

Vatican
MS.

is as old as the seventh century, or, according to some eminent scholars, still older.

There is another celebrated manuscript preserved in the Vatican palace at Rome, which is believed to have been written before the end of the fifth century. You observe that, in this way, we are at once carried back fourteen hundred years,—for here is actually a copy of the New Testament which can be demonstrated to be of that antiquity.

You will naturally inquire how it is that learned men are

Tests of the
antiquity of
MSS.

able to ascertain the age of ancient manuscripts. You will ask whether the reckoning can be depended on, or whether this judging of the age of manuscripts is not mere guess-work to some extent. But there is far less uncertainty connected with it than you might at first suppose. There are various means of judging respecting the age of manuscripts, such as the substance on which the writing is, whether it is vellum or paper, what sort of paper,—the ink, its composition and durability,—the character of the penmanship,—the forms of the letters, and so on. This whole subject has been carefully investigated,* and perfect confidence may be reposed in the conclusions to which learned men

* There is a very interesting work by Mr. Isaac Taylor devoted especially to the consideration of this subject, entitled *On the transmission of Ancient Books*.

have come. But the point which I particularly wish you to notice is this, that precisely the same principles are applied in deciding on the antiquity of the manuscripts of the Bible, as are applied in determining the age of the manuscripts of Greek, Latin, and other authors. We test the antiquity of a manuscript copy of New Testament, just in the same manner as we test the antiquity of a manuscript copy of Homer's Iliad, or Cicero's Orations. If we are wrong as to the age of the New Testament manuscripts, we are wrong as to the age of all the other manuscripts. If we are right in regard to Greek and Latin manuscripts in general, we are right in regard to the manuscripts of the New Testament.

So much as to the age of the manuscripts, and the evidence they afford respecting the antiquity of the New Testament. Observe how they also establish its genuineness and uncorruptedness. The various manuscripts of the New Testament are found to agree in a remarkable manner. I do not say they agree in every word and letter.

Various
Readings.

Slight differences exist, which are known by the name of *Various Readings*. You will easily understand how these arise. Suppose you take a paper and hand it to twenty clerks in succession, to be copied out by them. Probably, not a single man out of the twenty will copy the paper exactly in every particular. One will misspell, another will leave out a word, and so on. So here we shall have twenty manuscripts, and these will contain *Various Readings*. You see, then, how various readings arise. Observe now how far they are important. Probably each of the twenty copies of the paper is wrong in some points. Would it be correct, then, to say that no dependence can be placed on these transcripts? Let us suppose the original paper lost and that only the twenty copies remain, not one of which is quite faultless. Still the exact wording of the original paper can be known.

For, on examining the transcripts, we see that one copy has a word in one place which we find in none of the rest. Here, we should say the one manuscript is wrong, and the nineteen are right. Errors exist in all the copies, but not the same errors; and thus one copy corrects another. We go on in this way, through the whole paper; and, at the end, we feel no doubt that we know exactly the wording of the original document.

This is precisely the way learned men take with the copies of the New Testament. They compare the various manuscripts that are found in all parts of the world, note their differences, and decide what is the true reading. The differences among the various manuscripts are exceedingly unimportant. The very worst manuscript does not corrupt one principle of the faith, or destroy one moral precept. In the vast majority of cases, the various readings consist merely of different ways of spelling words, just as we see the same English word spelled in one book *honor*, and in another *honour*.

Lastly, it is very important to recollect that the works of no ancient author, Greek or Latin, have come down to us with so exceedingly few variations as the Christian Scriptures. With regard to most Oriental writings—Indian, Persian, and Arabic—the variations in the manuscripts are infinitely greater than those that occur in the Christian Scriptures.

III. We have a third proof of the antiquity and genuineness of the New Testament, in the
References and quotations by Christians. *References to it and Quotations from it made by early Christians.*

You are aware how frequently modern Christian authors, particularly writers on theology, make quotations from the Bible. In the works of the theological authors who have flourished since the Reformation, probably every part of the New Testament has been

quoted,—many parts have been so innumerable times. In like manner, we find, in the works of the authors of the middle ages, an immense number of quotations from the Christian Scriptures. We can, in this manner, proceed backwards to an exceedingly early period. For instance, there is a celebrated writer called Augustine, who flourished in the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century, whose works are quite as much filled with extracts from the Bible as the writings of any modern author. A century earlier (about A. D. 315) flourished Eusebius, a very voluminous writer, who studied the New Testament with critical accuracy, and who very frequently quotes from it. During the space of about two hundred years that intervened between this date and the completion of the New Testament near the end of the first century, there arose more than thirty authors, whose compositions are still extant. All of them quote from the Bible, and some of them very largely. These writers in many cases lived in places far apart from each other, such as Lyons, Carthage, Alexandria, Antioch, &c. This last circumstance shews how widely the knowledge of the Christian Scriptures had already extended. It also shews that the testimonies which can be drawn from these authors in favour of the genuineness of the Bible, are independent of each other.

IV. We have a fourth proof of the antiquity and genu-

References ineness of the New Testament in the *Refer-*
 and quota-
 tions by un-
 believers. *ences and Quotations made by the early unbeliev-*
ers.

The authors to whom I have been referring, were Christians. They wrote in explanation or defence of the Bible. But there were at the same time various Heathen authors who published books against the religion of Christ. The three most celebrated opponents of Christianity, in early times, were Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian. Julian flour-

Julian, rished in the middle of the 4th. century, Per-
 Porphyry, phyry in the middle of the 3rd, and Celsus
 Celsus. near the end of the 2d.

As Celsus* is the earliest of the three, we shall attend more particularly to his writings. It has been computed that there are at least eighty quotations from the New Testament in the fragments of his work that have been preserved. The great facts of Christ's birth, baptism, preaching, miracles, death, and resurrection, are all referred to by him, as mentioned in the writings of Christians;—indeed, an abridgement of the history of Christ may be found in Celsus.† “We have quoted these things,” says he, “out of your own writings.”‡

Chrysostom, a Christian writer of the fifth century, justly remarks: “Celsus and Porphyry are sufficient witnesses to the antiquity of our books. For the writings which they attack, certainly could not have been published after them.”§

The exact coincidence between our Bible and the quotations from it by Celsus, proves it to be the same as the one he perused about the year 176. He not unfrequently uses such forms of expression as this: “Jesus with his own mouth expressly declares these things, as you have recorded.”|| Such words clearly involve the genuineness of the New Testament writings.

I think, my young friend, that these proofs will satisfy you. A good deal more might be urged in attestation of

* Celsus flourished about the year of Christ 176. His work against Christianity was entitled, “The true Word.” He was answered by Origen about the year 246. The work of Celsus is lost; but copious extracts from it are found in Origen's reply. It is marked by a most bitter spirit.

† This is a remark of Doddridge's.

‡ See this and many striking quotations from Celsus in Lardner's Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, chap. xviii.

§ Hom. vi. Epist. I. ad Cor.

|| Lardner, as above, ch. xviii. Sect. 3.

the point under review; but it seems unnecessary to dwell any longer on the subject.

We have seen, then, that the New Testament consists of various books composed in the first century of the Christian era; and that it has come down to us as it was originally written.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

THE NEW TESTAMENT:—ITS CONTENTS; ITS CREDIBILITY.

My DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

THE arguments which were brought forward in my last letter, have established the antiquity, genuineness, and uncorrupted preservation, of the New Testament. A similar and not less convincing train of reasoning could be adduced to prove the same things of the Old Testament. But we are to confine our present inquiry to the New Testament.

Observe, then, at what precise point of our investigation we have arrived. We have seen, 1st, that the The point at which we have arrived. books of the New Testament were composed at the date which Christians assign to them; and, 2ndly, that they have been handed down to us in the form in which they were originally delivered. Here, then, is a volume, venerable and interesting, at all events, for its antiquity, whatever it may treat of,—whether religion, history, philosophy, or any thing else. Let us open it, and see what it contains. The first thing that strikes us, is that it consists of the writings of eight separate authors. Then we see that about half of it is occupied with an account of the origin of the Christian Religion, and its progress in early days—the rest being chiefly made up of letters written by an eminent Apostle, or preacher, distinguished Value of the N. T. from its antiquity and contents. in the first period of Christianity. Let us pause for a moment, to note how exceedingly precious a book like this must be. If

we should discover a volume containing history and letters connected with any religion, Greek, Latin, Hindu, or Chinese, written eighteen hundred years ago, learned men all over the world would seize the treasure with the greatest possible avidity. Orientalists have often complained of the sad want of ancient historical documents connected with the East; and letters—epistolary documents—we may be said to have none at all. And hence a thick darkness rests on ancient India, Persia, Arabia, and many other countries, which learned men greatly lament, but cannot hope to dispel. Just suppose that a book were now discovered which could be proved to have been composed about the period when Zoroaster or Buddha appeared, and which contained a full, plain statement of facts, and also letters written by the disciples of those famous men. What a prodigious excitement the discovery would make! What eagerness there would be among learned men to decypher, translate, expound, illustrate, the inestimable relic! But if this interest would be manifested (and very properly so) in a volume of this kind connected with Zoroastrianism or Buddhism, a far profounder interest surely should be felt in a book which throws a flood of light on the origin of such a system as the Christian Religion, which (whether it be true or false) has exerted, and must continue to exert, so vast an influence on the progress of the human mind and on the destinies of the human race.

What, then, does this remarkable book tell us? what information does it contain? It contains (among other things) an account of the birth, life, death, resurrection from the dead, and ascension to heaven, of Jesus Christ. It informs us that he was born miraculously of a virgin, that he taught new and very remarkable doctrines, that he died a sacrifice for the sins of men, and that after his death he appeared to his disciples, and was seen by them ascending to heaven, after he had commanded them to proclaim

his religion to all nations. Farther, it informs us how his disciples, after their master's removal, continued to preach and baptize in his name, and how the Christian religion spread abroad in the world.

The point, then, that now falls under consideration, is the *credibility* of the facts recorded in the New Testament. Is the book true or false? We have seen that it is old; but that does not prove it to be true. We have also seen that it is historical; but all histories are not true histories,—is it genuine history, or fable?

The credibility, or trustworthiness, of the New Testament is proved by the following arguments.

- I. In the first place, it is proved by the fact that *we possess no fewer than four different histories of the life of Christ.*

Four histories of Christ.

These books are all independent of each other. They evidently do not copy from each other. And yet they agree remarkably in their statements. Although they tell the story in different words, there is absolutely no contradiction among them.—We often believe a history when we have no more than one statement of it. For example, the wars of the Roman general Scipio Africanus are recorded by only one contemporary author, viz. Polybius; and yet the work of Polybius is deservedly held in the highest esteem, because he was the companion of Scipio and chiefly describes events which he himself had witnessed. But the events of the life of Christ are recorded by no fewer than four contemporary historians. Two of these, Matthew and John, were the constant companions of Christ, and had been eye-witnesses of what they relate. Another, Mark, was connected in the closest manner with Peter, one of Christ's disciples;—and the remaining historian, Luke, was the companion of the Apostle Paul.

Very seldom—probably never—has it happened that

any historical facts have been so fully and consistently attested as the events in the life of Christ.

The last historical book of the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, which was also written by Luke, is mainly occupied with the life of Paul, the friend and companion of the author.

II. In the second place, the credibility of the New Tes-

Circumstances
of the writers.

tament is proved by the *situation and circumstances of the writers.*

They had ample means of information as to the facts they record; and their whole position secured their making a right use of that information. The New

Means of
information.

Testament writers do not speak of a remote period, hidden in the mists of antiquity, of which little could with much certainty be either affirmed or denied. Nor do they refer to some far-off region, unexplored and unknown. No; but things recent, things near, things (as was mentioned above) of which they had been eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses—these form the subjects of their history. Nor were these things known to the writers

Publicity
of the facts.

alone. On the contrary, so far from being “done in a corner,” the chief events which they relate, occurred in Jerusalem and other cities of Judea, while they were garrisoned by Roman soldiers, and carefully watched by the Roman authorities. The things described took place in the presence of hundreds and often thousands of men, capable of judging, and ready to yield their testimony. You will at once perceive the great importance of this *publicity*, when I point to something entirely opposite in connection with Muhammad. Muhammadans tell us that, in one night, he rode from Mecca to Jerusalem, and then into heaven—and back again, after seeing and hearing many wonderful things which they specify. Here the question at once occurs: How can that be proved? Who saw, or who accompa-

nied, Muhammad on his extraordinary journey? Did any of his disciples? Did any of those who relate the story? The answer is, not one. Observe, I am now neither asserting, nor denying, the truth of the narrative,—all I say is this, that a story of this kind cannot easily be proved to be true. Those who believe it, believe it simply on Muhammad's authority. They may be right, or they may be wrong, in doing so; but it is important to note the fact. It was "done in a corner."

Although a few of the wonderful events recorded of Jesus Christ took place in secret—such as his temptation in the wilderness,—yet the far greater number of them were performed in public. He taught openly—in the presence of thousands. When, therefore, his followers gave an account of his teaching, those thousands could say whether the account was correct or not. The works of Christ were also openly performed; and thousands could testify whether he had really made the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the deaf to hear. Moreover, the historians of Christ's life (or Evangelists, as they are usually called) published their works in Judea, the very country in which the events which they relate, took place. Consequently, both the Jews, and many Romans resident in Judea, could instantly have detected and exposed any error which the works contained.

And what they thus *could* have done, they assuredly

The Jews would have exposed any erroneous statements.

would have done, if any errors had been discoverable in the writings of the Evangelists. The Jews were bitter enemies of the Christians. They had put Christ himself to death, and they wished to sweep away the Christian religion from the face of the earth. Very soon, also, the Heathen began to persecute the Christians, and in every way assail their faith. Had, then, the writers of the New Testament departed from the truth in a single instance; had they ex-

ed what was honorable to Christianity, or palliated, he jot or tittle, that which seemed dishonorable ; had claimed for Christ a power of working miracles that he not really possess, or a purity of life which was not universally confessed,—the enemies of the Christian religion eagerly have availed themselves of the mistake, in to overturn the authority of those who had fallen into but this, as we shall see, the enemies never did.

I. In the third place, the credibility of the New Testament is proved by *the character of the writers*.

We have already seen that they had full opportunities becoming thoroughly acquainted with the facts which relate. I now proceed to shew that it is certain they did to make a good use of their opportunities.—They honest men. The whole strain of their writings is this. Every impartial reader must be impressed with the tone of simplicity, sincerity, candour, and truthfulness, which pervades their writings. Ir honesty evident.

They exaggerate nothing—they conceal nothing. Master's lowly birth—his poverty,—their own humble tion—their slowness to comprehend—their unwilling- to believe—their temporary desertion of their Master, death on the cross, a fact which both the Jews and heathen have in all ages regarded as utterly disgrace- to Christ and Christians,—these, and many similar s, however much opposed to the natural vain-glory of are quietly related by the writers of the New Testa- without the least attempt to prevaricate, conceal, or them over. Honest men, truth-speaking men, they beyond all question—if we try their character by the ples which regulate all our judgments of men in general. is, then, is proved by the whole character of their writings. It is also proved by the whole character of their lives. They, as well as the other followers of Christ, were sub-

so proved
their suf-
gs.

jected to numberless and most severe sufferings on account of their religion. Excommunication—infamy—persecution—imprisonment—death,—these were the lot of Christians in those days.* You know very well, my young friend, what severe sufferings must be endured by those of your own countrymen who leave the religion of their fathers and enter the Christian Church—sufferings which look so formidable in prospect, that many young men who are entirely convinced of the truth of Christianity, yet tremble, and hesitate, and shrink, and finally turn away from Christ altogether. But the sufferings of converts in India now, are almost nothing in comparison with the sufferings of converts in the early ages of which we have been speaking. Truly the young and tender plant of the Christian religion was watered with blood!

What does all this prove? It proves most convincingly that the converts were sincere. They were no deceivers. They believed what they professed. When a man dies for his faith, no one in the world would think of calling him a hypocrite. No one could doubt that the language of his life was also the feeling of his heart.

But next, let us inquire what it was for which the disciples of Christ had such fearful trials to undergo—what it was that they believed. I beg you to observe that they suffered for believing in *facts—events*—things they had seen—things they had heard. There is a most important difference between matters of *opinion* and matters of *fact*—between points of speculation, and circumstances occurring in some definite place and time. Let us suppose that a philosopher who professes to hold certain opinions respecting God or the human mind, is, like Socrates of old, accused by his ene-

* I take it for granted that the reader is acquainted with Ancient History. If he is so, he will know that the statements here made are facts universally admitted.

mies of maintaining dangerous doctrines. Let us also suppose he is told that, unless he renounce those doctrines, he must die. Three things are possible in such a case. First, if the philosopher be not sincere in his professions—if he do not really believe what he says—then, there can be little doubt that he will at once recant, and save his life. Or secondly, even although he may in his heart be persuaded of the truth of what he has maintained, still the prospect of death may shake his firmness, and in this case again he may recant and save his life. We know that something like this happened in the case of the celebrated Galileo. But a third thing is possible. The philosopher may be not only sincere, but also firm in his belief and ready to die rather than renounce it. Let us just suppose *Shankar Acharya* (of whom you have often heard,) imprisoned by some of those Buddhists or Jainas with whom he was in the habit of disputing, and told that unless he renounce the tenets of the Vedānta philosophy, he must be put to death. Finally, let us suppose that the sage stands firm, and the threat is carried into execution. What does this prove? It proves that the philosopher is sincere in his professions—it proves that he really believes as he speaks. It does *not*, in the least degree, prove that the Vedānta philosophy is true. The philosopher dies for an opinion. Very well; but he may be mistaken in holding that opinion. We admit, and we admire, both his sincerity and his firmness; but the correctness of his views is quite another thing. After all, he may have thrown his life away, and died for a delusion. This is when a man

Matters of opinion and matters of fact. Their difference.

dies for a *matter of opinion*. But the disciples of Christ died in attestation of the truth of a *matter of fact*. The great fact for which the disciples of Christ suffered, was that their master had risen from the dead, had appeared after his resurrection to multitudes of people, and had in their own sight ascended

into heaven. This was no point of mere speculation, but a question of things visible, tangible, and cognizable by the senses. The writers of the New Testament often refer to this important circumstance. "We declare unto you that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled."* "We have seen and testify"—† "This voice which came from heaven, we heard."‡ Such is their pointed language.

Are men to trust their senses—to believe what their eyes, ears, and hands, announce to them? If not, the world must at once come to a stand-still. We *must* believe our senses—we cannot do otherwise. Our Maker intends that we should; and, if we do not, we cannot live in this world.

But perhaps some one may make a desperate attempt to get rid of this argument, and remind us that it is possible very weak, very credulous, fanatical people might have imagined that they saw, and heard, and handled, things which they never actually did see, or hear, or handle. Let us grant to this objection all the weight which can possibly be asked. It is true that people under powerful excitement have imagined that they saw or heard things that did not exist—as superstitious people may imagine that they see ghosts, and as insane people fancy they see and hear many things that others cannot see or hear. Still, this has no resemblance whatever to the case of the early followers of Christ. Strong temporary excitement, in solitude and darkness, may make a superstitious man fancy he sees or hears a spectre; but the apparition will vanish with the dawn or the approach of another person. But the early disciples of Christ testify that, for forty days after he rose from the dead, he continued to appear to them, sit with them, walk with them, converse with them, eat with them, and satisfy all their doubts as to the reality of his resurrection,—on one occasion no fewer than five hundred specta-

Their senses
could not have
deceived them.

* 1 John i. i. † 1 John iv. 14. ‡ 2 Peter i. 18.

s being present. Unless, then, we suppose that Christ's disciples were all lunatics—moonstruck madmen—there is no possibility of evading the conclusion that they really saw, heard, and handled, as they said. What judge or jury would reject their evidence? Even if the life of a fellow-creature depended on it, and we felt it our duty before God most carefully to sift the whole evidence, we could not hesitate a moment in receiving testimony such as this.

The conclusion of the whole matter is that the disciples of Christ testified about matters of fact in which they could not be deceived. We formerly saw that they were no impostors—no deceivers. But, if they were neither deceivers nor deceived, it follows that their testimony is true. That to say, the *credibility* of the New Testament history is proved.

IV. But again, we must recollect that we have not only the testimony of the writers of the New Testament and of the Apostles of Christ, but also that of all those individuals who, in the first ages of Christianity, professed their belief of that religion. In this case, again, it can be proved—as was proved above of the Evangelists and Apostles—that they were neither deceivers, nor deceived. Not deceivers,—for they too were persecuted, imprisoned, killed. Not deceived,—for they could test, by the usual rules of evidence, that was asserted regarding Christ; and when property, liberty, and life, depended on the decision, we may rest assured they would not have believed, unless ample evidence had been first afforded.

V. The credibility of the New Testament is farther proved by the fact that many of its most important statements were fully admitted by those who were not Christians. Pliny the younger, about seventy years after the death of Christ, describes

Christ's disciples neither deceivers nor deceived.

Testimony of early Christians.

Testimony of early unbelievers. Pliny.

the Christians as constituting a vast multitude in the province of Bithynia alone, and he farther tells us that they

Tacitus. worshipped Christ as God. Tacitus the historian relates that the Christians were cruelly persecuted at Rome by the Emperor Nero. This was about thirty-four years after the death of Christ. The same historian expressly mentions that Christ himself was put to death in Judea during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, in Suetonius. the time of the Emperor Tiberius. The historian Suetonius testifies to nearly similar facts. The Josephus. Jewish historian, Josephus, refers to many events that are recorded in the New Testament.

Nor is this all. Even the bitterest enemies of Christianity in early days did not venture to deny the truth of the New Testament narrative. It is very remarkable that the early opponents of Christianity, whether Jews or Heathens, admit that the great facts of the life of Christ were such as the New Testament represents them to have been. They never would have admitted this, had not the facts been beyond dispute.

VI. Besides this express testimony to the great historical facts recorded in the New Testament, we find an immense number of statements made in the New Testament, which the authority of Greek and Roman writers abundantly confirms. For example, assertions are made regarding many cities and nations which have been fully described by ancient authors. Thus, we find statements made respecting the cities of Jerusalem, Cæsarea, Damascus, Antioch, Tarsus, Ephesus, Alexandria, Philippi, Athens, Corinth, Rome and others. Statements are made respecting their modes of government, laws, customs, history, religion, and many other things. But, if the New Testament had not been composed at the time to which it is referred, it would have been utterly impossible

Corroboration
from Heathen
writers, of his-
torical state-
ments in N. T.

for the writers afterwards to have described such a multitude of events and circumstances, without falling into very frequent errors. But the fact is, that the more carefully we compare the statements contained in the New Testament with those made by Greek and Roman writers, the more are we impressed with the surprising accuracy of the assertions in the former.

VII. Again, we have not only the authors of ancient Greece and Rome as witnesses regarding this matter, but we possess a very large number of *Monuments* that have

Corrobo-
ration from
monuments.

come down to us from the time in question such as coins, medals, and inscriptions. These monuments often corroborate the statements of the New Testament in a very striking manner. Coins still continue to be dug up, after lying buried in the ground for 1800 years—each bearing its peculiar legend, but all consistent with the truth of the facts recorded in the New Testament. This *Monumental* evidence, as it may be called, is deservedly esteemed of high importance.

Before leaving the subject, we may just give an illustration or two which will clearly shew the nature of the evidence in favour of the truth of the New Testament narrative, which is obtained from general history and monuments still existing. In the book of Acts, Gallio

The N. T. is called the
minutely accurate. Ex-
amples.

is called the *proconsul* of Achaia. Some critics were of opinion that he ought to have been rather styled *procurator*,—because, although Achaia was originally a senatorial province and the proper title of the governor was *proconsul*, yet the Emperor Tiberius had changed it into an imperial province, so that the title of the governor must have been changed too. But a passage has been found in the historian Suetonius which shews that the statement in the New Testament is correct; for it tells us that the Emperor

OR Claudius turned it again into a senatorial province, —so that the proper title of the governor again became *proconsul*.

Another assertion in the book of Acts was also somewhat perplexing for a time. Sergius Paulus is called *anthypatos*, or *proconsul*, of Cyprus, whereas Cyprus was believed to have been an imperial province and to have had only a *prator*. Coins, however, have recently been discovered which were struck while Proclus, the successor of Sergius Paulus, was governor,—and the very title *anthypatos* is given to him. Some passages in Roman authors have also been lately discovered which prove that the assertion in the Acts is perfectly correct.

These two instances will shew how exceedingly minute and searching the examination has been, which learned men have instituted into such matters,—and how the truth of the New Testament comes out, often in a manner equally unexpected and triumphant.*

I am, &c.

* See Tholuck, quoted in Edinburgh Review. clxxxii. p. 342. Horne's Introduction Vol. I. p. 195.

Among the most remarkable of the many "Monumental Evidences" in support of the facts recorded in the Bible is that which has so unexpectedly come to light among the ruins of ancient Assyria. Scattered over that country there are immense mounds of earth which, when excavated, are found to contain the remains of houses, palaces, and other buildings. Very much has thus been discovered which confirms the statements of the Bible; nothing has been discovered which conflicts with them. Mr. Layard, in his works on Nineveh and Babylon, has frequently occasion to point out the coincidence between the assertions of the Old Testament and the facts he has discovered in his researches. Sir Henry Rawlinson, who has devoted much attention to the monuments of Assyria, finds in them the names of many of the kings and nations mentioned in the Bible, such as *Samaria*, *Sargon*, *Shalmaneser*, *Sennacherib*, *Hezekiah*. The agreement between the monumental history of the last king with that contained in the Bible is wonderful; the very number of the talents paid as tribute-money to

*And the only new evidence for Christianity
is the fact that the Christian religion
is a religion of a different kind*

LETTER V.

THE MIRACULOUS EVIDENCE FOR CHRISTIANITY.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

THE considerations which have been brought forward in the preceding letters, are, I believe, perfectly sufficient to convince any reflecting and candid mind that the history contained in the New Testament is true. Unless we are to disbelieve all ancient history, we must believe the history of the New Testament. Unless we shall utterly deny the facts recorded of Plato or Demosthenes in Grecian history, and of Cato or Cicero in Roman history, we must admit the facts recorded concerning Jesus Christ and his Apostles in Christian history.

But it is not enough to say that we possess as strong evidence regarding the facts contained in the books of the New Testament, as we possess regarding those recorded of the illustrious men who flourished even in the later and better known ages of Greece and Rome. For, in truth,

New Testament history
better supported
than Greek or Roman.

Assyria is the same in both cases. Sir H. Rawlinson says: "I doubt not I shall yet be able to point out [on the walls of the Assyrian palaces, the pictures of] the Jewish maidens who were delivered to Sennacherib, and perhaps to identify the portrait of the humble Hezekiah."

We are properly occupied only with the New Testament at present; but the facts stated in this note will be useful as conveying a clear conception of what monumental evidence is, and of the manner in which remarkable additions still continue to be made from time to time to the vast body of it already existing in support of the Christian Scriptures.

we possess much stronger evidence in the former case. For example, we have far more solid grounds for believing what is recorded in the New Testament concerning the life and death of Jesus Christ, than for believing what is written concerning the contest at Thermopylæ between Xerxes and Leonidas, or the warlike exploits of Julius Cæsar in Gaul.

Three litera-
tures unite to
shed light on
it.

We have no fewer than three distinct literatures meeting, so to speak, in a point—in one focus—and shedding their united light on the transactions that occurred during the life of Christ and the early progress of Christianity. We have the Grecian literature, the Roman literature, and the Jewish literature, all illustrating that important period.

Now, many important statements in history are received on the credit of only one of these literatures. Nay, sometimes, events which no one ventures to dispute, are recorded by only one writer. The "Retreat of the ten thousand Greeks" under the command of Xenophon, is fully described by only one historian; and yet the narrative is universally received as true, interesting, and important.

The credibility, then, or trustworthiness, of the New Testament history is most remarkable. It is confirmed by evidences which are uncommonly clear, numerous, and powerful. Any ancient book may be disbelieved rather than this.—Such are the feelings with which every young Native should commence the study of the New Testament.

When, accordingly, he does proceed to peruse the New

Extraordi-
nary nature
of many facts
recorded in
the N. T.

Testament, his attention will soon be arrested by the very extraordinary nature of many of the facts which it records. He will find it asserted that Jesus Christ performed a vast number of wonderful works, such as healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and even raising the dead to life,—and that Christ himself rose from the

dead and ascended into heaven. These and many similar occurrences which are recorded in the New Testament are exceedingly unlike any thing which we ourselves have ever witnessed. In a word, the New Testament mentions the occurrence of many miracles. Let us see whether we can give a simple explanation of what a miracle is.

When we survey the objects that exist in the world around us, we cannot fail to be convinced that God is, and also that He is possessed of the attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness. Further, we perceive that all the works of God are characterized by order, regularity, harmony. Night and day—the various seasons—the revolutions of the Sun and Moon—and a thousand other things, follow according to a fixed order, in beautiful unvarying succession. The rock loosened from the precipice, will roll down into the abyss. The rivers invariably flow from a higher to a lower level. Thus it is that, on seeing one thing, we can often predict others. We call this regularity *the order of Nature*; and we say that all these things happen in accordance with certain *laws* which God has been pleased to establish among the works of His hand.

But the New Testament expressly declares that things have been done, which deviate from the ordinary course of Nature. For example, when it is said that Christ raised dead men to life, every one knows that this is entirely different from any thing that we have seen happen—since the dead have never (so far as our experience extends) returned to life.

A miracle, then, denotes an exercise of power adequate to control, and change, the usual order of Nature.

I shall reduce under three propositions all the remarks that we require to make respecting miracles in general, or the miracles of Christ in particular.

I. *We must not too hastily believe that miracles were*

We must test miraculous narratives. *wrought; we must believe them only when full and satisfactory evidence is afforded.*

In most nations of the world men are too credulous.

Excessive credulity common.

An uneducated Hindu will believe any miraculous event you please to relate; and all the Hindu books are filled with extraordinary stories in which things are said to have occurred, which are quite contrary to the experience of men in our day. Educated Hindus do not believe one hundredth part of the wonderful tales they hear of the gods and their doings in past or present times. In like manner, the writings of Greek and Roman authors contain many wonderful narratives which no one now regards as entitled to any credit. The historian Livy records a great many prodigies. Even Tacitus, who is justly regarded as one of the most judicious writers that Roman literature can boast of, is not free from this blemish;—for example, he relates that the Emperor Vespasian cured two men, one blind and one lame, at Alexandria,—and although we are not entirely certain that the historian himself believed that these wonderful cures were real, yet we know that in the time of Vespasian some did actually think so. Now-a-days, no reader of Tacitus has any hesitation in saying that no miracle was wrought in this case. Indeed, in reading the histories of Greece and Rome, we generally *weed out* (so to speak) all such extraordinary narratives, and attach credit only to the remainder.

We do this, because, in the vast majority of cases, we can find no satisfactory proof that the wonders ever really took place. When we call for the witnesses, and cross-examine them, as is done in a court of justice, the evidence in support of the asserted miracle seems to melt entirely away. Let us take an example. The Muhammadans believe that many miraculous events occurred in

connexion with Muhammad. They tell us that he was always overshadowed by a cloud; that food and fruits were brought to him from heaven; that animals, mountains, trees, and stones, paid homage to him and proclaimed his praises; and so on.* The question, then, is whether we have satisfactory proof that these things actually occurred. On inquiry we find that they are included among the traditions that are recorded concerning Muhammad. We find, farther, that no traditions respecting Muhammad were written until more than one hundred years after his death, and that a very large number of them cannot be traced back more than three or four hundred years. We then call to mind the fact that oral tradition is a most variable thing, and that even in the space of one hundred years from Muhammad's time it must have sustained great alterations. Lastly, we find that different classes of Muhammadans entertain exceedingly different opinions on the subject of these traditions,—some acknowledging one hundred thousand of them to be true,—others acknowledging seven thousand two hundred and seventy five,—others, five thousand two hundred and sixty five,—others, four thousand four hundred and eighty four,—and others expressing considerable doubt as to the perfect accuracy of any of them. In this case, then, we are involved in inextricable confusion; and he must be a credulous man indeed, who would believe a story simply because it is recorded among the Muhammadan traditions.

From this you will easily see the necessity of the principle mentioned above, viz. that one must carefully examine the evidence that is adduced to establish the reality of any supposed miraculous occurrence. In regard to the miracles recorded in the New Testament, we are most willing and anxious that precisely the same thing should

* From the Hayât-ul-Kúlûb. Pfander's Remarks on Muhammad, p. 17.

be done. Let the matter be thoroughly sifted. Let nothing be believed without suitable and sufficient proof. Christianity herself demands the inquiry. Her language is "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

In the preceding letter, we considered the question of the credibility of the New Testament history in general. We are now to consider the credibility of its miracles in particular. The arguments that must be brought forward are necessarily very much the same in both cases; and therefore, in order to avoid running into much repetition, I shall set them down in this place, with the greatest possible brevity,—begging you, however, to read Letter IV over again, and apply the explanations it contains to the special question we are now discussing.

II. *We possess full and satisfactory evidence that the*

We have full evidence that Christ wrought miracles. *miracles ascribed in the New Testament to Jesus Christ were really performed.*

The following considerations afford such evidence.

1. Christ himself distinctly appealed to his miracles as evidence that he had been commissioned by God,—and he publicly challenged inquiry into their reality.

2. His miracles were of a very clear and palpable kind, so that their truth or falsehood could easily be tested. Farther, Christ performed his works in the presence of multitudes, not only of friends, but of enemies.

3. His disciples believed the miracles to be real, and died in attestation of their truth.

4. Vast numbers of people, both Jews and Gentiles, were convinced of the reality of Christ's miracles, and they also cheerfully submitted to death in attestation of their truth.

Many Jews and Gentiles did the same.

5. His enemies also admitted the reality of the mi-

His enemies ad-
mitted their truth. racles.

What was said above (pages 34, 35) on the admission by enemies, of the truth of the general narrative of the New Testament, applies also to its miraculous part. But we may still add a few words on so important a subject. During the life of Christ the confession of the Jews was ; "This man doeth many miracles." (John xi. 47.) After his death and resurrection his disciples appealed to his miracles as undeniable facts. (Acts ii. 22.) We have not the slightest reason to think that such assertions of Christ's disciples, whether oral or written, were contradicted in the early days of Christianity.

The opinions of the Jews of later days are embodied in such writings as the Talmud. This book admits that Jesus performed many wonderful works, and attributes the power to his skill in magic. Even in the bitterest of the Jewish writings against Christ,* his power of healing lepers and raising the dead is fully admitted.

Celsus and other Heathen opponents of Christianity were very much perplexed by the wonderful works of Christ. Celsus would fain have asserted that they were not real; but, very generally, he like the Jews maintains that Christ performed them by the power of magic. Or, he has a third explanation. "Frequently," says Origen. "Celsus, being unable to deny the real occurrence of the works of Christ, accuses them of being mere juggling tricks." Still, you observe he admits that they actually took place.

Julian, in like manner, admits the facts; but anxious to evade the argument which they afford in proof of Christ's divine mission, he affirms there is nothing very wonderful in "healing lame and blind people, and exorcising demoniacs."

We accept this admission of the facts, made by Celsus

* Such as the *Toledoth Jesu*.

and Julian. Of the inference to be drawn from them we shall afterwards speak.*

6. Rites and institutions were established to commemorate the most remarkable of the miracles, at the time they took place,—and these have continued from that time till now.

Remarkable institutions in commemoration of them.

Thus the practice of keeping holy the first day of the week, and of meeting on that day for the public worship of God; was instituted to commemorate the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The rites of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were also closely connected with his death and resurrection. Christ is represented in the New Testament as appointing the Lord's Supper to be celebrated from that time onwards, in memory of his death. The argument, then, is short and conclusive. The rite could not have been introduced at a later period, for every man could have testified that it was new,—and novelty would have been a conclusive proof against its truth. The same thing holds good of the other institutions.

I believe, my young friend, that any one of these arguments taken by itself would afford sufficient evidence for the miracles of Christ; and that the force of the whole taken together is overwhelming. Let us select one of them and dwell upon it for a moment,—and let it be the third of those mentioned above. Let us just think how we should regard any similar case of evidence happening in ordinary life. Suppose, for example, that "twelve men whose probity and good sense I have long known, seriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes; and in which it was impossible that they should be deceived; if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of the account, should

* It is fair to observe that the credulity of the Jews and Heathen of those days somewhat weakens the value of their testimony in favour of the performance of miracles by Christ. Still, their admission is valuable; for it is evidently made with considerable reluctance.

call these men into his presence and offer them a short proposal either to confess the imposture, or submit to be tied up to a gibbet; if they should refuse with one voice to acknowledge that there existed any falsehood or imposture in the case; if this threat were communicated to them separately, yet with no different effect; if it was at last executed; if I myself saw them one after another consenting to be racked, burnt, or strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account,—I undertake to say that there exists not a sceptic in the world who would not believe them.”*

The arguments that have been now enumerated, form the great and decisive evidence for the reality of the miracles wrought by Jesus Christ. We may advert to two other considerations, which are also of great importance, although not of so manifestly conclusive a character as those that have been stated above.

7. The miracles of Christ are exceedingly different in their nature from almost all the marvels that are recorded in the sacred books of the Heathen, whether of ancient or modern times.

Their nature simple and sublime.

The difference will be forcibly illustrated if I remind you of the nature of the miracles believed by Heathen miracles. Hindus. A sage (Agastya) swallows the ocean, which consists of fresh water,—and, when it issues again from his body, it is salt. A god (Shiva) cuts off his child's head, and it is replaced by an elephant's head. To shelter his friends from a tempest, another god (Krishna) suspends a mountain over their heads on the tip of his finger. The wonders recorded by the ancient Greeks and Romans were scarcely less astounding. The traditions of the Muhammadans regarding the miracles of their prophet are of the same description: Muhammad splits the moon in two, and sends one half of it up each sleeve,—and so on.

Now, I am anxious not to press you too much with this

* Paley's Evidences. Introduction.

particular argument ;—for, if it be not entirely satisfactory to your mind, we can easily dispense with it. But you will distinctly perceive that in stories of this kind there is something exceedingly wild, fantastic, and confounding. There is an excess—a waste—of miracle. The wonders stun you with surprise. They resemble the prodigious things that you see in dreams. They are mad freaks of power. You always feel that the object sought could have been attained in some much simpler and better way.

Not so with the miracles of Christ. These are never wild or fantastic ;—they are indeed exertions of mighty power,—but the power is, in its manifestations, calm, simple, and sublime. He healed the sick. He gave sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and made the lame to walk. He relieved the wants of the distressed. In some special instances, he raised the dead. How totally different are such miracles from those we have been speaking of above!

8. Another thing highly deserving of notice is the

Their objects
lofty and be-
nevolent.

importance of the objects for which the
miracles of Christ were wrought.

We cannot conceive that miracles would be wrought without a sufficient cause. But many of the wonderful works ascribed to the Hindu divinities were confessedly done in *lilá*, or *sport*. Many others were done without any distinct reason. On the contrary, the miracles of Christ were done with a high object in view, viz. the exhibition of his Divine character and the demonstration of his mission. They were cogent proofs of his power and goodness. He appealed to them as irresistible evidence of his having been sent by God.

Observe now the practical application of all this to the question of his Divine mission.

The mira-
cles prove his
divine mis-
sion.

III. *Since the miracles ascribed to Christ were really performed, they prove that he is a divinely-appointed messenger.*

The works were manifestly superhuman. It is certain that no human power could raise a man from the dead after he had been buried four days,—and that no mere man could raise himself from the dead, as Jesus Christ did. In such things, no one can doubt that the hand of Almighty God is to be recognized. We are compelled to say, as one of the Jews said to Christ: “No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.”

But it is right to notice the objection of the unbelieving Jews. Many saw and confessed the wonderful works which Christ performed; and yet they refused to receive them as evidence that he was commissioned by God. “He works these things by the aid of the devil,” said the unbelieving Jews. They saw and admitted that the works were beyond the power of man; and hence, as they were determined not to confess that they were wrought by the power of God, they had no resource but to ascribe them to the devil. Christ himself pointed out to the Jews that all his works tended to destroy Satan’s empire,—were all beneficent and holy in their character and tendency, and therefore could not have been performed through the aid of a malevolent and unholy being. This argument is conclusive. All the works and words of Christ tended to the glory of God and the happiness of men. They were entirely worthy of the “God of truth,” but wholly opposed to the character of the “father of lies.”

How great the power and knowledge of evil angels may be, we cannot tell. They may possess, and they may exercise, far greater power and knowledge than man. Therefore, when we see merely an exertion of superhuman power, we cannot with certainty infer that the action was performed by God. It surpasses human might,—but angelic might may be equal to it, and the hand of Omnipotence may not have been put forth. But if angelic power performed it,

how are we to know whether a fallen or an unfallen angel was the author? The answer is not difficult. If with superhuman power in the work we see conjoined a moral excellence which our consciences approve as worthy in all respects of heaven, then we can have no hesitation in declaring it to be the work of God, either mediately or immediately.* If an angel performed it, it must have been a holy angel, acting in obedience to God;—it could not possibly have been a fiend.

I shall dwell a moment longer on this objection of the unbelieving Jews,—for I am anxious to remove every difficulty out of your way in considering this important subject. In India, you are aware, multitudes of people believe that extraordinary works can be wrought by men who are in league with devils, or *possessed* by them. So far as my experience extends, I have seen no cause to think that these *possessions*, and the works and words accompanying them, are at all superhuman;—but it would be very rash to assert that there are no real cases of *possession* in India, even in the nineteenth century,—and to say that such things never did, and never can, occur, would be highly presumptuous. Take then all such cases of either real, or pretended, diabolic influence; examine them; and you will see that light is not more opposite to darkness, than they are to the miracles of Christ. The works ascribed to *bhûtas*, or devils, in India, are often absurd—almost laughable. In other cases they are malevolent. They may, in some cases, excite feelings of terror, and in other cases, of disgust,—but they ever are repulsive and unlovely. How different from the lofty and gracious works of Christ, from which there so brightly shines a holy and heavenly radiance which convinces and attracts every heart that is not perversely in love with darkness!

* By *mediately* we mean performed through the medium of other agents; by *immediately*, we mean performed by God himself directly.

Briefly, then, to repeat and sum up the whole. The works of Jesus Christ were clear manifestations of superhuman power. They were no less clear manifestations of benevolence and holiness. To deny that the person who performed them, was sent by God, is wholly unreasonable. The objection of the Jews, that they were performed by Satanic power, is absurd; for—even if we should admit that God might yield Satan sufficient power to perform such mighty works,—yet, to suppose that Satan would perform them, is to suppose that the devil is a holy and benevolent being—that is to say, that Satan is not Satan.

I am, &c.

NOTE.

A few additional remarks on this very important subject may be useful to the more advanced student.

The works performed by Christ are designated in the New Testament by various names—such as *works, signs, powers* (i. e. *powerful works*), *wonders*.

They were not wrought *solely* to afford evidence of His Divine mission. They were manifestations of *Him*—of His power, wisdom, goodness, love, holiness,—the effluence of the glory of the Sun of Righteousness. They were often, so to speak, embodied teaching—thus rendered visible and palpable.

A miracle has been defined by the enemies of Christianity, as a *violation of a Law of Nature*. This definition is entirely inadmissible.

Sometimes the friends of Christianity have defined a miracle as a *suspension of a Law of Nature*. But this definition is not happy; it is, in all events, imperfect and obscure.

The word Miracle is certainly used in two different senses. Sometimes it means any superhuman act—any act to which human power is not equal. Sometimes it means an act to which only Divine power is equal. Let this ambiguity be carefully noted.

When we speak of the order of Nature being controlled by God and a miracle effected, it is plain that this may be in either of two ways. Either, a direct volition of God may do it; or, one law of Nature may be affected, and overruled, so to speak, by the intervention of another. As an instance of the latter kind, we may refer to the drying of the Red Sea where the Israelites crossed it. We read that “the Lord caused the sea to go back by a *strong east wind* all that night, and made the sea dry land.” The natural gravitation of the waters to their lowest level was counteracted by the violent wind: one law of Nature was supervened upon another. Yet the miracle was as real and remarkable as if a direct volition of God, without intermediate agency, had withdrawn the waters.

LETTER VI.

THE EVIDENCE FROM PROPHECY.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

ONE of the most important arguments in proof of the truth of the Christian Religion, is drawn from the *Prophecies* which are contained in the Bible. Both in the Old and New Testaments there are found declarations of events that were still future at the time the declarations were made; and these are so numerous and definite as to afford a most satisfactory test of the truth of the book in which they are contained. If they should have occurred as was predicted, it is not possible to deny that the book is from God; if not, it is, of course, to be rejected as false.

By a *Prophecy* we mean a declaration of something still future, the occurrence of which it is beyond the power of human sagacity to foresee. Man possesses no power of penetrating far into futurity; all he can do is to draw some inferences from past and present things as to the probable course of events that are still to come;—but very few of the most sagacious men on earth would presume to hazard any conjectures regarding events that were to happen many years after their own day. But in the Bible there are hundreds of statements clear, definite, and minute, respecting occurrences removed very far from the time at which the speaker lived.

It has been justly said that Prophecy is a miracle. What are commonly called miracles, are miracles of *power*; a prophecy is a miracle of *knowledge*. A miracle of power

and a miracle of knowledge differ in this respect, that the former carries its evidence with it as soon as it is performed, whereas the latter becomes convincing, not as soon as it is given, but as soon as the prediction is fulfilled.

Let us note the precise place which Prophecy holds in the Christian system. The scheme of religion in the Old

Its place in
the Christian
system.

and New Testaments is briefly this, that man is a fallen being, and that, for his restoration to the Divine favour, there has been a

manifestation of God in human nature on earth, in the person of Jesus Christ, whose life of spotless holiness and expiatory death open up a way to pardon and to the blessedness of heaven. This manifestation of God in human nature did not take place till about four thousand years after the fall of man; Christ then came, in what the Bible calls "the fulness of time,"—the time most suitable for the execution of God's high purposes in the redemption of the

human race. Therefore, in order that those men who lived at an early period of the world's history might repose their faith upon the Mighty Deliverer who had not yet actually come, there needed to be *prophecies* that is to say, statements regarding his coming, his work, his character, his life, his death, his resurrection. Without these, the religion of those who lived before Christ would have been exceedingly different from that of those who lived after him, and the mode of salvation could not have been the same throughout all ages of the world. The prophecies delivered before Christ came, served the same purpose to men in those days, that history does to us. The early believers looked *forward* to Christ,—we now look *back* to Him; but He is the central object on which the eyes of all believers are alike fixed.

There are also prophecies respecting the Jewish people, and the nations with which they were brought into connexion, such as Egypt, Syria, Edom, Babylon, &c. The

intention of these, as given to ancient believers, may be seen from a simple illustration. Suppose a son who had hitherto lived in his father's house and under his father's immediate care, were about to go to live in a foreign country where he must see all kinds of wickedness practised and be exposed to constant temptation,—how anxious would the father be to warn and counsel him beforehand regarding all these dangers! If the father *could* foretell what his son would be exposed to, he would. It is thus that God deals with his Church. He warns,—He foretells what events will happen to it and to the nations of the earth, when it is desirable that such things should be known.

Second use. And now, observe how very beautifully Prophecy, which subserved these most important purposes at first, afterwards answers another end not less important. When a prophecy is fulfilled, it becomes an undeniable evidence of the superhuman knowledge of him who uttered it. Thus the prophecies which, when delivered to the ancient Jews, were of exceeding importance as instructions and warnings, are now of exceeding importance as evidences of our religion. Every promise of blessing in case of obedience—every threatening of punishment to disobedience—becomes, when the prophecy is clearly fulfilled, an unanswerable argument for the truth of the Scriptures.

Such, then, is the nature of Prophecy, as it can be inferred from the Scriptures themselves. This idea of Prophecy you will admit, is equally reasonable and interesting. According to this you will easily understand that the predictions contained in the Scriptures must be numerous. It was of the highest importance that the ancient Church should be well informed regarding the great Deliverer who was to come; and also that the chief events that were to happen to

Prophecies
very nume-
rous.

herself and the surrounding nations, should be distinctly set forth.

Accordingly, the evidences from Prophecy are very numerous,—far too much so to be exhibited fully in these pages.*

We have not space to write at full length even the predictions relating to Christ. In Horne's Introduction, a work which some of our Native friends in Bombay are acquainted with, the prophecies regarding Christ, with the statement of their fulfilment, occupy no less than 15 pages in small type.—It is then only to a few of the most remarkable of the prophecies that we can now direct our attention.

Let us first notice the prophecies which
Prophecies by Christ. Christ himself delivered. They may be class-
 ed under the following heads.

1. Prophecies respecting his death, and the circumstances attending it.
2. Prophecies respecting his resurrection and ascension.
3. Prophecies respecting the history and condition of his followers.
4. Prophecies respecting the destruction of Jerusalem.

In regard to his death, and the events connected with it, Christ distinctly predicted the **PLACE**¹ where he should die,—the **TIME**²,—the **CIRCUMSTANCES**, viz. the treachery

* Many works have been written on the subject, and we may refer to such books as Dr. Keith's Evidence of Prophecy for a full, yet simple, statement of this important argument. Bishop Newton on the Prophecies is also an admirable work, but scarcely so simple as Keith.

1 Matt. xvi. 12. From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and be killed.

2 Matt. xx. 18. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and shall condemn him to death.

of one disciple,³ the desertion of the rest,⁴ and conspiracy against him by the chief priests and scribes,⁵—the MANNER of his death, viz. crucifixion.⁶ That kind of death was unknown among the Jews,—it was a death reserved by the Romans for their slaves;—and yet Christ distinctly predicted that this punishment would be inflicted on himself. He also predicted that he would rise again from the dead on the third day.⁷ This prediction had been so distinctly made that his enemies knew it, and endeavoured to prevent its fulfilment.⁸ He foretold his ascension into heaven.⁹ He predicted that his followers would be hated, excommunicated, and persecuted by their countrymen and the world generally, and that many of them would be put to death.¹⁰—Let us here pause for a moment to

3 Mark xiv. 18. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.

4 John xvi. 32. Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

5 Mark x. 33. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles.

6 Matt. xx. 19. And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him.

7 Mark x. 34. And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him; and the third day he shall rise again.

8 Matt. xxvii. 62, 63. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

9 John vi. 62. What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?

10 John xv. 19. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

John xiv. 2, 5. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service.

But these things have I told you that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.

inquire what impostor ever ventured to predict his resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven. Or who but Christ ever warned his disciples that their believing on him would be attended with shame, suffering, and death? Assuredly, to say such things is not the way in which an impostor would try to gain converts.

One of the longest and most remarkable prophecies in the New Testament is that respecting the destruction of Jerusalem. See Luke xxi, Matthew xxiv. The prediction was uttered about forty years before the fulfilment; and at that time there was no probability, which mere human wisdom could discover, of such a thing taking place. Jerusalem was then in the hands of the Romans, and Judea was in complete subjection. Yet Christ foretold the destruction of the city and temple, and the circumstances therewith connected. Moreover, these things are by no means declared in mere general terms;—the description is exceedingly particular. How exactly all was fulfilled, we learn from the Jewish historian Josephus, who would not have said any thing he could have avoided saying, that tended to confirm the evidences of the Christian Religion. Christ predicted that, before Jerusalem was destroyed, false Christs—that is, men who pretended to be the Messiah foretold in the Old Testament—would appear. He predicted that fearful calamities would happen during the interval between the time when he spoke and the destruction of Jerusalem. He spoke of wars and rumours of wars; of famines, pestilences, earthquakes; and of severe persecutions to which his followers would be subjected, but which would not prevent his religion from being very extensively propagated. He mentioned a particular sign which would warn his followers to flee from the general ruin in Jerusalem; the enclosing of Jerusalem with armies; the unparalleled afflictions to which its inhabitants would be subjected; the entire destruction of the city and tem-

ple. Points still more minute even than these were specified. Of that strong and massive structure, the temple, He predicted that not one stone would be left standing on another; the city was to be laid even with the ground; the siege was to be shortened, to allow the lives of some to be spared; and the Jews were to be carried away captive into all nations. And these things took place. We know from history that the Christians who lived in Jerusalem escaped the fearful calamities that befel the Jews, because the former believed the words of Christ, and left the devoted city, when the signs of its coming desolation, that had been enumerated by Christ, began to appear. So undeniable was the exact correspondence between the prophecy and the accomplishment, that Eusebius, one of the early Christian writers, after quoting long passages from Josephus, the Jewish historian, to prove that the words of Christ had been literally fulfilled, appeals to the prediction as evincing a wonderful and "truly divine" knowledge, and as furnishing an unanswerable argument for the truth of the Christian Religion.

The Old Testament, in like manner, contains many remarkable prophecies, the fulfilment of which
Prophecies in O. T. demonstrates the truth of the Christian Religion. As the plan of these "Letters" requires us to postpone the consideration of the Old Testament until the whole inquiry with respect to the New Testament is ended, we shall not now enter at length into the subject of the prophecies contained in the former. Yet we must not entirely pass by a subject of such exceeding interest and magnitude. You may first turn to the Appendix, and read what is there written regarding the antiquity, genuineness, and credibility, of the Old Testament, and then proceed with what I have now to say regarding the predictions which that book contains. Or, it may perhaps suffice for the present, if you remember that, at all events,

the Old Testament was written at least 300 years before the birth of Christ. For we have a translation of it from Hebrew into Greek,* which, according to accurate computations, was executed in Egypt about the year 285 before Christ, and soon came into general use in the countries where the Greek language was spoken. This fact is quite enough for our present purpose; for no man will deny that the fulfilment of a series of prophecies, which were delivered three hundred years before the events took place, would evince supernatural knowledge on the part of those who uttered them. It matters little whether the prophecy was delivered two hundred years, or a thousand years, before the event;—in either case, the foreknowledge is miraculous.

The chief subject of Prophecy in the Old Testament is Christ. One feels himself overwhelmed with the multitude of passages, when he proceeds to enumerate the predictions that point to Christ. They amount literally to hundreds. I can give only a few specimens. We find, near the commencement of the Bible, a prediction of a deliverer who was to be the “seed of the woman.”^a Again, he was to be born of the seed of Abraham^b; of the tribe of Judah^c; of the house of David^d; in the city of Bethlehem^e; while the second temple was standing^f; and at a specified time.^g A remarkable person resembling Elijah was to precede him.^h He was to be born of a Virgin.ⁱ He was to work miracles evincing exceeding power and love.^j He was to be rejected by his countrymen^k; scourged, mocked, spit

* Commonly called the Septuagint Translation.

a Gen. iii. 15. Compare Gal. iv. 4. f Hagg ii. 7, 9.

Heb. ii. 14.

g Dan. ix. 24.

b Gen. xxii. 18—Gal. iii. 16.

h Mal. iv. 5.

c Gen. xlix. 10.—Hebr. vii. 14.

i Isai. vii. 14.

d Isai. xi. 10. Jerem. xxii. 5, 6.

j Isai. lxi. 1, 2, 3.—Luke iv. 17—21.

e Micah v. 2.—Matt. ii. 1.

k Isai. liii. 2, 3.—John i. 11.

upon.^l His hands and feet were to be pierced.^m He was to be cut off by a violent deathⁿ; yet he was not to see corruption, nor to be left in the power of the grave.^o

It is an important fact that the prophecies respecting Christ look so contradictory, that one would have said beforehand that it was impossible they could all be fulfilled in one individual. In one place he is represented as a victorious king,^p—in another, as “oppressed and afflicted,”^q and “cut off.”^r In one place he is “a man of sorrows,”^s and in another “the mighty God.”^t These, and other apparently irreconcilable, characteristics all meet and harmonize in Jesus Christ.

Turn now to the fifty-third chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah, and carefully read it from beginning to end. It applies to no human being except Jesus Christ; but it applies to Him with astonishing accuracy. That single chapter has convinced many who were at one period unbelievers, that the Scriptures are indeed the word of God. Let me, in particular, refer to one of the most witty, but at the same time most profligate, infidels ever known—John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester—who lived in the time of Charles II, king of England. This man long scoffed at the claims of Religion; but, before his death, he was brought to express his thorough belief in Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of men; and it is interesting to observe that the wonderful chapter now referred to, was the portion of Scripture that especially carried his conviction and melted his heart.

There are also many prophecies in the Old Testament respecting nations which are well known, and the history of which we can at once compare with the prediction, so as to test the accuracy of the latter. There are prophecies

^l Isai. i. 6. Matt. xxvi. 67.

^m Psalm xxii. 16.

ⁿ Isai. liii. 8. Dan. ix. 26.

^o Psalm xvi. 10—Acts ii. 29, 30, 31.

^p Psalm ii. 8, 9.

^q Isai. liii. 7.

^r Dan. ix. 26.

^s Isai. liii. 3.

^t Isai. ix. 6.

respecting the Jewish people and their, being scattered throughout all lands,^u yet not utterly destroyed, as many other nations have been.^v So it has come to pass.—There are prophecies respecting Egypt;—although one of the mightiest monarchies of ancient days, it was prophesied that it would sink into one of “the basest of kingdoms.”^w This also has come to pass.—There are prophecies respecting Nineveh, the proud capital of the Assyrian empire; and the prophecies have been accomplished,—Nineveh is “a desolation and dry like a wilderness.”^x Of Babylon, the most magnificent city of antiquity, it was foretold, “it shall never be inhabited;”^y and, accordingly travellers tell us that throughout its ruins there reigns “a silence profound as the grave.” Of Tyre, the most celebrated emporium of the ancient world, whose “merchants were princes, and her traffickers the honourable of the earth,” it was said: “I will make her like the top of a rock; she shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea.”^z Accordingly we find that the splendid harbour of Tyre has been utterly destroyed; only small fishing boats can enter, and these with difficulty; and the traveller Bruce describes Tyre as “a rock whereon fishers dry their nets.”

Many other prophecies, equally remarkable for their fulfilment, might be quoted; but these will suffice.

A mathematical writer of distinction—Dr. Olinthus Gregory—has computed, on purely mathematical principles, the amount of antecedent probability against the fulfilment of the prophecies, and consequently the amount of evidence for the truth of the Scriptures if the prophecies should actually be accomplished. Suppose, he says, that ten men in ancient days claimed to be prophets, and that

^u Deut. iv. 27. xxiii. 64—68.

^v Jerem. xlvi. 27, 28.

^w Ezek. xxix. 15.

^x Zephaniah ii. 13.

^y Isai. xlii. 20.

^z Ezek. xxvi. 45.

each of them mentioned *five* independent particulars as to the place of birth, character, doctrine, &c. of a great personage who was afterwards to appear. Here, are *fifty* particulars mentioned. The probability against the occurrence of all these fifty particulars is as 1,125,000,000,000,000 to 1, that is, *eleven hundred and twenty five millions of millions to unity*. But this computation has no reference to *time*. If all these fifty particulars must be fulfilled about the same period, the probability against the occurrence of the prophecies is immensely increased. But the predictions clearly and distinctly made in the Old Testament, which have been undoubtedly fulfilled, amount to many hundreds. Therefore, the power of numbers cannot express the force of the argument derived from the fulfilment of the prophecies for the truth of the Christian Religion.*

It seems unnecessary to occupy more time with this inquiry. We may well ask with the author I have just been quoting,—if a book supported by such evidences is not true, what is there, in the wide world, that is stable and sure? I trust, my young friend, you will not harden your heart against such convincing evidence, but will acknowledge, in the words of the Bible itself, that “Prophecy came not by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

I am, &c.

NOTE.

The following suggestions may be added to what is contained in the above Letter.

Prophecy, in the Scriptural sense, does not consist solely of prediction; the Prophets often spoke as prophets without foretelling future events. Much of what they uttered was Moral or Doctrinal—without being predictive. The utterance of what is merely Moral will not necessarily prove that the Prophet is inspired.

* Gregory's Letters on the Christian Religion. Letter VI.

The Predictive part of Prophecy is of vast importance, and it is distinctly referred to in the Bible as being so. God is represented as challenging the false deities of the Heathen to foretell future events. "Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods." (Isaiah xli. 23). See also Isaiah xlv. 7.

As the Heathen nations had false miracles, so they had false prophecies. Their Oracles were famous. But no Heathen predictions that have come down to us are deserving of attention. As prophecies, they are absurd. When they were not ordinary conjectures or reckless guesses, they were either unintelligible enigmas, or else expressions cunningly contrived to be susceptible of two or more applications.

The *criterion* or test of Prophetic Inspiration may be simply stated thus. Three conditions are requisite: viz.

1. The prediction must be promulgated prior to the event.
2. The event must be such as human sagacity could not foresee.
3. The fulfilment must be clear.

LETTER VII.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE. THE BIBLE NOT FROM MAN.
ITS CONSISTENCY. ITS HARMONY WITH NATURE
AND PROVIDENCE.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

THE preceding letters may suffice for the External Evidences of Christianity. All I attempt to give you is an outline of the great leading arguments in favour of the New Testament; but, ^{Point we have arrived at.} however brief the preceding remarks have been, I trust they are sufficient. The humble inquirer who is anxious to find out the truth and earnestly seeks for Divine teaching, will feel that even these few pages establish the truth of the Christian Revelation.

Yet our work is not half done. You recollect that the Internal Evidences are divided into two great heads, ^{Internal Evidence.} viz. the External Evidences, and the Internal Evidences. We are now to attend to the latter.

THE difference between the external and internal evidences has already been sufficiently explained. It is useful to note the difference; but it is not necessary to be very scrupulous in keeping the arguments distinct. Indeed it is very difficult to do so; for sometimes the same argument is partly external and partly internal.

IN examining the internal evidence in favour of Christianity, we attend to the character of the religion itself. We do not ask, how was the message brought—or, who is the messenger?—but we ask, what is the message?

is it such a message as we might expect to proceed from Almighty God? is the religion worthy of Him?

Perhaps you will say that it is extremely difficult to answer such questions. You have in part studied the philosophy of Bacon, and you have learnt from him that it is very difficult for us to say beforehand what God will do or not do;—you have, in fact, been learning something of the extent of human ignorance. I admit that the question is not easy; but observe, there is another thing to be mentioned, that will render it somewhat less difficult than you may suppose. Christianity must be either from God, or from man. We know from various sources much about the character and ways of God; and we know from various sources still more about the character and ways of man. Thus we have two tests by which we can try Christianity. First, we can compare it with what we know respecting God, and see whether it is likely to have proceeded from Him; and again, we can compare it with what we know of man, and judge whether it resembles a mere human production.

Let us first inquire whether Christianity looks like a mere human production.

The early preachers of Christianity were Jews. Now, we know what were the feelings of the Jews who lived in those days. They were exceedingly proud of their ancestry, their country, their religion, their temple, and of every thing that belonged to them; and, having been conquered by the Romans, they were very impatient of the foreign yoke, and were continually plotting to overthrow the Roman dominion and re-establish their own. They not only wished deliverance, but they expected that the Messiah mentioned in the Old Testament would be a great earthly conqueror, who would subdue their enemies and confer on the Jewish nation the sovereignty of the world. Farther, they thought

Christianity
not a human
invention.

that their religion was not merely the only true religion, but that even its minutest peculiarities would endure for ever.

Had Christianity, then, been an invention of mere men, it is exceedingly difficult to comprehend how the Apostles themselves could have adopted the opinions which they continually express. For, they distinctly declare that Christ's kingdom is not of this world; they command subjects to obey their governors, and they do not in one instance give expression to the sentiment that the Jews are to lord it over the nations of the earth. Moreover, they expressly forbid that the special rites of the Jewish religion should be preserved. These things were calculated to irritate

the Jews beyond measure; and we know that they were still more bitter opponents of Christianity than even the Gentiles were. The change the Apostles introduced was not merely a reform;—the Jews considered it an entire revolution,—or, as they expressed it, “a turning of the world upside down.” Here, then, is a twofold argument. In the first place, if the Apostles had invented a religion, they hardly *could* have devised one so greatly opposed to all the views and feelings which they themselves, as Jews, entertained. And secondly, they never *would* have offered one so certain to bring down upon their heads the fiercest indignation of their countrymen.

But perhaps they invented a religion fitted to be popular among the Gentiles. Let us see. We have on record the opinion which some of the learned Gentiles formed of Christianity, and we find that, for a long time, the philosophers both of Greece and Rome disliked it, and strenuously opposed it. It attacked *them* in the first place. In the midst of those airy speculations and discussions in which the learned

men so much delighted, the voice of Christianity was heard declaring; "Thus saith the Lord. The wisdom of

The philosophers opposed Christianity. this world is foolishness in the sight of God." The proud philosophers of Rome and Athens were told by Christian preach-

ers that they, as well as the common people, were miserable sinners, exposed to the anger of God, and in need of that salvation which Christ had procured for them by his cross. These things aroused their deepest resentment. They speedily began to speak against Christianity, and to write against it.—Again, the common people among the Gentiles hated Christianity. The Christ-

The Gentile populace did the same. ians were accustomed to testify boldly against the gods whom the Gentiles acknowledged; and, as they had no visible

object of worship, they were regarded as Atheists by the ignorant populace, who thought they could not more effectually please their deities, than by putting the Christians to death. If then the Apostles had wished to invent a religion that might be acceptable to the Gentiles, they never would have devised such a system as Christianity.

What I have now said regarding the opposition of both Jews and Gentiles to Christianity, is fully confirmed by history. For three hundred years, the Christians were hated, oppressed, and often bitterly persecuted. They were never secure of their lives; at any moment, the rage of the people might break forth against them, and the cry be heard; "Away with the Christians to the lions." Surely then, even if we might suppose that the Apostles could have committed such a blunder as, in the first instance, to invent so unpopular a religion, yet they speedily would have altered it, when they found it exposed themselves to infamy, imprisonment, and death. No man wishes to be miserable. But so far as mere outward circumstances were concerned, the early Christians were "of all men, the

most miserable." It is not possible to conceive that sane men would have rendered themselves thus wretched, unless in obedience to God and in the persuasion that "His favour is better than life."

We thus clearly see that Christianity is not at all such a religion as we could expect to be invented by men, in the circumstances in which the early promulgators of it were placed.

Nor would man, in any circumstances, invent such a religion.

Neither is it such a religion as man, in any circumstances, would invent. It is entirely opposed to human pride. Man boasts of his intellect and reason; Christianity tells him that, if he desire to be truly wise, he must first learn to confess himself a fool, and then ask wisdom of God. Man thinks himself possessed of moral excellence and entitled to God's favour; Christianity tells him that he is dead in trespasses and sins, and exposed to the wrath of God. The Bible is the most humbling book in the world. It strips man of all his vain pretensions, and leaves him naked and bare. Is it conceivable that such a system was devised by man?

Christianity, then, cannot be from man. Let us now consider some of the arguments that show it to be such a religion as we might expect from God.

Internal harmony of the Scriptures.

I. *The perfect harmony that exists among the different parts of the Christian Scriptures is a proof of their having come from God.*

We have the life of Christ related by four different writers; but there is no contradiction in their statements. There is sufficient variety in their expressions to shew that they did not copy from each other, yet such a wonderful agreement as proves their astonishing accuracy in relating facts. Again, we have a book containing notices of the Acts of the Apostles, and many letters written by five of those Apostles, which often refer to points

In regard to facts.

in the history of the authors. All these books have been submitted to a most close and rigid scrutiny. Like witnesses in a court of justice, they have been questioned and cross-questioned again and again, to see whether their evidence exactly agrees. But, whether the examination has been conducted by friends or foes, the result has invariably been the same. Not only has there been no contradiction discovered but unexpected, minute, and very striking coincidences have come to light. One of the most interesting books in the English language is a work by Dr. Paley, called *Horæ Paulinæ*, in which he compares the facts and incidents recorded in the Acts of the Apostles with those that are referred to in the Epistles. The coincidences which he has traced are most remarkable. The witnesses have been subjected to the most searching examination possible, and the most thorough agreement has been found to prevail among them.

The same entire harmony is found to prevail in all the doctrinal statements of the Christian Scrip-

In regard
to doctrines.

Harmony
between the
Scriptures and
Nature.

II. *The harmony of the Christian Scriptures with the works of Nature is a proof of their having come from God.*

Nature is from God. If Christianity be so too, we may expect to see in it, something of the same style of workmanship that we find in Nature. Or, in other words, if the book of Nature and the book of Revelation are both from God, we naturally look for some evidences that they have proceeded from one author.

This is a deep inquiry. To enter into it at full length would demand more time than we can spare, and perhaps more thought than you, my young friend, can as yet exercise. We may content ourselves, therefore, with a brief allusion to the subject. When the Bible was written, the various sciences were in a very rude and imperfect state,

and the writers (had they been guided merely by human wisdom) could scarcely have refrained from expressing the opinions on scientific subjects which were universally entertained in their age. We shall afterwards see that the Hindu books, the Zend books, and the Koran, introduce many statements connected with scientific questions, and that these are frequently erroneous. On the other hand, it is most remarkable that there are no scientific blunders in the Christian Scriptures. The works both of Jews and Gentiles who lived at, or near, the same period with the writers of the New Testament, contain many speculations, and state many things as facts, which the progress of philosophy has now completely set aside. But not so with the New Testament writings. This is a strong argument in support of the opinion that they were inspired by God.

III. *The harmony of the Christian Scriptures with the*

Harmony
between the
Scriptures and
Providence.

*Providence, or moral government, of God is
a proof of their having come from God.*

This, like the preceding head, is a subject of very great importance and interest; and, as your own philosophical studies advance, you will be able to trace still deeper and more remarkable resemblances between Providence and the Scriptures. I will not at present dwell upon it at much length; but you will distinctly understand the nature of the argument from the following observations. One of the objections which young natives frequently urge against Christianity is this, that, if Christianity had been intended by God to be a religion for all men, God would have directly revealed it to all men, and revealed it to all long ago. It is thus maintained that, because many men do not know it until other men explain it to them, and because many never heard of it till lately, it cannot have been designed by God to become universal. Now, what light do God's proceedings in His ordinary providence, throw on this question? We shall take the

simplest illustrations. Iron is one of the most valuable gifts of God in nature,—but some countries have no iron mines; is it wrong in them to bring iron from other lands? Some useful medicines have been discovered only very recently; is it right to say that, since God did not allow them to be found out for many thousand years, He does not intend them to be used for the benefit of men now? Clearly, the notion that what God wishes to be learned respecting himself, He will always communicate directly and not through human instrumentality, is opposed to His conduct in providence. He intends that men should understand and keep His commandments; but, unless the parents and guardians of children teach them to do so, and carefully train them in the ways of righteousness, the children will grow up ignorant, careless and ungodly. Just in the same way, God commands Christians to go and teach all nations but, unless Christians do so, the nations will remain ignorant, wicked, and miserable. The circumstance that you in this country learn the way of salvation not from God directly, but from Christian Missionaries, is perfectly parallel to the fact that you learned in childhood to avoid lying and stealing, not directly from God himself, but from your parents and instructors. To say, “if God had wished me to believe on Christ, He himself would have told me so by a voice from heaven,” is the same kind of argument as saying, “if God had wished me not to steal, He himself would have told me so by a voice from heaven.”

In the cases I have now referred to, you trace a close similarity between Providence and Christianity. The book of Providence and the book of Revelation appear written in similar characters and by the same hand. They resemble each other even in various characteristics which some

It extends
even to dif-
ficulties.

men may think objectionable. For example, the assertion in the Bible that chil-

dren often suffer for the sins of their parents, is a statement which many unbelievers have held to furnish a strong argument against the Bible. But the very same thing is seen in God's ordinary providence. A wicked parent can injure, or murder, his child. Or, if he spare his body, he can pollute and poison his soul: Indeed, the child often *necessarily* suffers on account of his parent's sin,—for example, the parent who has enfeebled his body by vicious conduct *cannot* transmit a healthy constitution to his offspring. If you ask, why is this? we must answer, that we do not well know. But such is the fact; and that is enough.

The argument, then, which has now been explained, is briefly this: There is a wonderful similarity between many things in Christianity and in Providence,—and the similarity exists even in cases in which the principles of God's doings are so profound as to be to us perplexing and incomprehensible; so that, in this way, often the

Difficulties
thus, often,
prove the
truth of the
Scriptures.

very difficulties that exist in Christianity become powerful arguments in its support. Man would have striven to keep such difficulties out of sight. Man, in inventing a religion, would have made it as free from objections as he possibly could. God, however, will not consent to impair the truth, because man is unable, as yet, fully to comprehend it; and, so long as there are depths in Providence which we cannot fathom, there will be depths in Religion which we cannot fathom.*

I am, &c.

* The subject which has been noticed in the last three or four pages is one of the most interesting portions of the Christian Evidence.

The reader who has attended in some measure to the study of logic or mental philosophy will find the argument treated in a profoundly philosophic spirit in the celebrated work of Butler, entitled; "The Analogy of Religion (Natural and Revealed) to the constitution and course of Nature."

LETTER VIII.

CHRISTIANITY COMPARED WITH NATURAL RELIGION.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

WE proceed with our inquiry into the internal evidences of the Christian religion. We come now to compare it with what is called Natural Religion. By Natural Religion we mean those truths respecting God which man might discover by the exercise of his own mind in the contemplation of God. This subject is closely connected with what we considered in the last letter, but still it deserves a separate examination.

We may grant that, even without any miraculous revelation from heaven, men might still attain to a considerable knowledge of God. There is what we call the Light of Nature; it denotes all that knowledge of God which we might derive from the works of Nature around us, the Providence of God, and the constitution of our own minds. When we unite all the instruction which these things communicate respecting God, into a system, we term that system Natural Religion. Let

A common error on this subject.

me, however, beg you to avoid an error into which people often fall on this subject. Some have thought that, because the Light of Nature shows many truths respecting God, men would easily see all these truths;—they suppose that, whensoever Nature speaks, human beings hear. Not so, however. The voice of Nature says; “Do no murder,”—and yet, there are nations that delight in nothing but war and blood,—

there are even races of cannibals. Thus, then, although Nature speaks, men often shut their ears, and hear not her voice.—You are, then, by no means at liberty to suppose there ever was a nation that held *all* those truths which we include under Natural Religion. Not even any of the philosophers of antiquity held the whole of that system which we now so denominate, and the opinions of the common people were, in most cases, very widely removed from our present system of Natural Religion.

Another thing ought to be carefully attended to. It is the opinion of all Christians, and of some also who are sceptics, that Almighty God granted a Revelation to mankind soon after their creation, and that important fragments of that original Revelation still remain in the Heathen systems of religion. On this principle, many of those truths which Heathen nations hold respecting God, have been obtained from *recollection* or *tradition*, and not *discovery*.

Take, then, these things into account; and Natural Religion is seen to consist of those doctrines respecting God which are intimated by the constitution of Nature, but which, although intimated, may not be generally comprehended. It is exceedingly probable that, unless Revelation had enabled us to interpret the voice of Nature, we should never have learned more than a very insignificant part of what she actually teaches. When we speak then, of Natural Religion, we include all that men, *in the use of every assistance they possess*, can see to be intimated in Nature. It is after hearing all that Christianity and other religions have to communicate, that men proceed to state what are the truths to which Nature testifies.

I am the more anxious to explain my meaning on this point, because many young men in India still seem to think that the truths laid down in modern treatises on Na-

An error common in India. tural Religion have actually been discovered by the human mind without the aid of Christianity. Assuredly, such is not the fact. Take an illustration. Suppose a man long shut up in a dark apartment, and having no idea where a door may be found by which he may escape. Suppose now a light is brought in for a few moments, and that, by its assistance, he sees where the door lies. Surely the man is not in the same state now, as he was before the light was introduced; and surely too, he would be a vain and foolish boaster, if he cried; "Take away the light,—it has been, and can be of no use to me." And yet this is the way in which many young Natives deal with Christianity.

Keeping all these things in recollection, let us go on to compare Christianity with Natural Religion.

I. The first remark I make on the subject is this:

All the truths of Natural Religion are recognized by Christianity. *There is not a single truth recognized by Natural Religion, nor a single duty inculcated by it, which Christianity does not equally recognize and inculcate.*

Let any doctrine be mentioned respecting God, which writers on Natural Religion generally admit to be in accordance with the highest reason, and I undertake to shew the same doctrine written in the Bible, in language more beautiful and lofty than that in which any philosopher ever clothed it. Or, let the ethical philosopher, who analyzes the conscience of man and thence deduces the laws of moral obligation, state any duty, public or private, which can be demonstrated to be binding on human beings; and that duty I shall undertake to shew, written as with a sunbeam, on the pages of the Christian Revelation!

There is, indeed, one great principle that ought to be taken in connexion with what has been said;—it partly modifies, though it does not in the least contradict, the assertion just made. It is this, that since Christianity (if it be fr

Christianity in advance of human systems. God) must be a perfect system of truth and duty, and since all our earthly systems are imperfect, Christianity must continually be in *advance* of human systems. It would be a singularly interesting fact, if some doctrines of Christianity which were objected to by one age, were yet recognized to be true by a subsequent age, wiser than its predecessors. The Bible is ever the same; but human knowledge is continually advancing, and men are becoming gradually wiser. Is it then the case that some things in Christianity were formerly found fault with, which are now admitted to be unexceptionable? Yes; even so. Take, as examples, the Christian doctrine regarding woman, as intended not to be the servant, but the companion, of man, and the prohibition of polygamy which naturally arises out of that doctrine. On the first promulgation of Christianity, these things were considered highly unreasonable; but no enlightened man now considers them unreasonable.—Again, the Bible exhorts men to cherish humility. The ancients ridiculed that quality, and despised a humble man as a creature of mean and abject spirit. But who, among enlightened men in modern days, does not profess to admire humility?—Many other examples might be given; but these will suffice to illustrate the point contended for, viz. that Christianity is necessarily in advance of mere human reason, and that thus men often raise objections to the Scriptures simply from their own ignorance. The experience of the past ought to teach us lessons of caution for the future. Let us beware lest arguments be started which will prove to posterity that we failed, only because of our own blindness, to recognize the majestic beauty of the Christian faith.

Let us, then, briefly enumerate some of the doctrines of Christianity; and let us see whether they are not in accordance with the highest reason.

Doctrines in which
Christianity and Na-
tural Religion agree.

In our standard works on Natural Religion we find such doctrines as the following enunciated regarding God.

His eternity; self-existence; independence; unity; infinity; immutability; spirituality; omnipotence; omnipresence; omniscience; holiness; justice; goodness; truth.—

He created all things. He preserves all things. He rules all things.

Moral evil (or Sin) exists. God is not its author. He hates it. He punishes it.

Man is His creature, and dependent on Him for every blessing. It is his duty to serve God supremely. He is a moral being. He is a subject of the moral government of God. He is destined for another state of existence, in which rewards or punishments await him. He is a sinner. He is in many respects unhappy. A breach exists between God and him.

These doctrines concerning God and man the Scriptures confirm. The Scriptures speak thus :—

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God. (Psalm xc. 2.)

God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, "I AM hath sent me unto you." (Ex. iii. 14.) [The scriptural name of God,—Jehovah—implies that He is the centre and source of all being.]

God is not worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life and breath and all things. (Acts xx. 25) Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things. (Rom. xi. 36.)

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. (Deut. vi. 4.)

The heaven, even the heaven of heavens, cannot contain Him. (I Kings viii. 27.) Canst thou by searching find out God? (Job. xi. 7.)

I, the Lord, change not. (Mal. iii. 6.) With the Father of lights is no variableness, neither any shadow of turning. (James i. 17.)

God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. (John iv. 24.)

Is any thing too hard for the Lord? (Gen. xviii. 14.) With God all things are possible. (Matt. xix. 26.)

Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. (Jer. xxiii. 24.)
Behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee.
(I Kings viii. 27.)

His understanding is infinite. (Ps. cxlvii. 5.) O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! (Rom. xi. 33.)

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts. (Isai. vi. 3.)

I am the Lord which execute loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord. (Jer. ix. 24.)

The Lord is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. (Ps. cxlv. 9.)

Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. (Isai. xxv. 1.)

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (Gen. i. 1.)

The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. (Ps. cxlv. 15, 16.)

His kingdom ruleth over all. (Ps. ciii. 19.)

The whole world lieth in wickedness. (1 John. v. 19.)

Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. (James i. 13.)

The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord. (Prov. xv. 9.)

Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished. (Prov. xi. 21.)

In Him we live, and move, and have our being. (Acts xvii. 18.)

Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Cor. x. 31.)

Every one of us shall give account of himself to God. (Rom. xiv. 12.)

These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. (Matt. xxv. 46.)

All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Rom. iii. 23.)

Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. (Job xviii. 5.)

We were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (Eph. ii. 3.)

Such is a very brief summary of doctrines in which Christianity agrees with Natural Religion. In regard to all such doctrines, it would be easy to find confirmation in the admissions of men of different nations and religions. No system indeed, except Christianity, ever acknowledged all these truths; and the creeds of most nations have been in

direct contradiction to many of them;—nevertheless, we may set them down as truths of Natural Religion. Although she might probably never have discovered them, enlightened Reason at once admits them.

So far, then, Christianity and Natural Religion agree,—the difference between them being this, that Christianity proclaims most of these great doctrines with a distinctness and emphasis that render them far more solemn and commanding than any mere philosopher ever made them.

II. These considerations bring us to another great fact. *While Christianity never contradicts Natural Religion, she reveals a vast amount of truth more than Natural Religion reveals.*

This of course, was to be expected. When we speak of a Divine Revelation, we mean a disclosure by God of important truths which man, of himself, could not have found out. Unless Christianity contained doctrines which man is unable to discover by his unaided faculties, where would have been the necessity for its being given? Christianity, then, if she be of divine origin, must contain important truths which are beyond the reach of the unaided human intellect.

But it is of the utmost importance to observe that all the additional truths which Christianity discloses, require to be in perfect harmony with those of Natural Religion. Truth cannot contradict truth. The relation of Natural Religion and Christianity may be understood from the following illustration. Natural Religion resembles a building, which has been left in an exceedingly incomplete and fragmentary state. We trace a deep and extensive foundation laid,—we see a massive wall, here and there, raised to a considerable height,—every thing seems begun on a vast and imposing scale of architecture; but the plan of the building is unknown, and there are many parts the use or purpose of which we cannot dis-

Yet these
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Nat. Rel.

Revelation
has necessarily
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Natural Religion.

cover. The imperfect building, in fact, is a riddle to us,—and, even if we knew the plan, we have not the power to finish it in a style at all corresponding with the splendour of its commencement. Now, Christianity just steps in and finishes the building. She rears a sublime superstructure worthy of those massive foundations; she includes every wall and stone that is already built, and shews how one grand and beautiful conception arranged all the parts which, in their rudimentary state, had so baffled our comprehension. Or, to dismiss the illustration, there are many facts in Nature that perplex us,—there are many questions suggested by Natural Religion, which Natural Religion cannot answer. Christianity throws light on those perplexing facts; and many of those questions she completely solves. What I mean will be perfectly clear from the following considerations. Natural Religion testifies that God must hate sin;—it also testifies that we are sinners; and then it puts the question; “Can a holy God forgive sin? and, if He can, how can He forgive it?” It asks the question, and the human heart feels that no inquiry in the whole world is more important,—but Natural Religion cannot answer the question. Hereupon Christianity comes in, and supplies the answer—an answer in harmony with every doctrine both of Natural Religion and Christianity herself,—and its truth is confirmed by every heart that has sincerely sought to test the reality of the deliverance offered. This is the grand fundamental doctrine of Christianity, *salvation through the atonement of Jesus Christ*. Christianity announces the all-important fact that God, while He hates sin, desires that the sinner may be saved both from its punishment and pollution. She reveals the mode in which the sinner can be saved. She declares that the Son of God has become incarnate, to deliver us from everlasting ruin. While she proclaims in a voice of thunder the holy justice of God, she declares in words of subduing tenderness the love of

God to man. Christ has come from heaven to instruct men, and to die for their sins. That glorious Being lived a life of sorrow, and died a death of agony unutterable, for the sake of man. Now, pardon is offered to all. "Believe, and be saved"—is the invitation, nay the command, of God to sinful, miserable man. Man requires two things to make him a happy servant of God,—pardon and sanctification and Christianity clearly reveals the mode in which both of these blessings can be obtained.

Now, the first thing that strikes us in regard to such doctrines, is that they contradict no truth of Natural Religion. They are *above* it, but not *against* it. They can be reared on the foundation laid by Natural Religion without in the least degree marring the plan of the building. And, unquestionably, they complete the edifice in a style of bold and massive architecture answering fully to the width and depth of the foundations.

Again, Christianity stands single and apart from all other religions in such doctrines. No religion save Christianity possesses any thing like them. Other systems have also built on the foundation of Natural Religion; but their additions, generally speaking, have marred the plan of the building, and moreover they crumble to pieces at the touch of Reason. Thus, all religions admit the existence of God; but on this foundation one builds polytheism, another pantheism, many build idolatry; some deny the moral attributes of God, others deny His providence; some while they refer to the necessity of pardon, disregard the need of the purification of our nature,—and so on. Reason overturns such vain additions.

We might compare the declarations of Christianity and Natural Religion in regard to *mortality*, in the same way as we have compared their statements of *doctrine*.

Natural Religion inculcates many important principles

The same true
of the moral-
ity of Nat. Rel.
and Christiani-
ty.

of morality. It declares that we ought to reverence God as our Maker, Preserver, and Benefactor. It declares that we ought to be just and kind to our fellow-men; and that our duty and happiness require us to seek after truth and purity in our own hearts. Christianity proclaims the same truths, but more decidedly and emphatically, and, at the same time, more simply and intelligibly. She sums up the whole duty of man in one beautiful word, Love—love to God, and love to man. She commands us to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. She commands us to love all men, and do good to all, as we have opportunity. She takes cognizance of the heart, as well as the outward act, and declares that an evil wish, or an evil thought, is of the same nature as the deed to which it naturally gives birth. “He that hateth his brother,” she says, “is a murderer.” According to Christianity, external purity is nothing but hypocrisy, if it be not accompanied with internal purity. She inculcates meekness, patience, self-denial, lowliness of mind.

The morality of Christianity is absolutely perfect. She never grants liberty to commit the smallest sin. Many men have thought that it might be allowable to commit sin with a good intention;—for example, to tell a lie in certain cases;—but Christianity declares that, if we do evil that good may come, we shall be condemned. No man then can object to Christianity that it is not sufficiently pure;—the only objection that unbelievers can bring against it, is that its standard is too high, too holy for man to attain to. But this only proves that the religion came from God, and not from man. It is not conceivable that the perfectly holy God could give a partially holy law. Man, on the contrary, would invent a law imperfect and erring like himself.

Thus we have seen that Christianity is in entire accordance with Natural Religion, so far as Natural Religion ex-

tends,—and also that Christianity is a most important advance upon the latter. They are like two lines perfectly parallel, one of which is longer than the other. Or rather to repeat once more the illustration already employed,—Christianity completes the building begun by Natural Religion, and she does so in a style of august magnificence fully corresponding to the depth and extent of the foundations already laid.

I am &c.

LETTER IX.

CHRISTIANITY CONSIDERED IN ITS PECULIARITIES.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

THE subject considered in my last letter is one of so much importance that we cannot yet well dismiss the consideration of it. We shall now direct our attention to the chief particulars in which Christianity is in advance of Natural Religion. These are the topics which form the chief points of attack on the part of unbelievers,—whereas, Christians regard them as the greatest glory of their religion. My object now is not merely to defend them, but to use them as arguments in support of Christianity. Unbelievers have said that these peculiarities prove something *against* our religion; I hope to shew that they prove much *in favour* of its truth.

The main doctrines of Christianity, which are unknown to Natural Religion, are the following.

1. The doctrine of the Trinity, that is to say, that there is a threefold distinction in the Godhead. It is of importance to observe that this is not given as a mere speculative or barren truth. It has a vital connexion with our happiness and duty; for

The Divine Being, who is the first in the glorious Trinity, “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son,” to die for us.

The Divine Being who is the second in the glorious Trinity, and who is called the Son of God, or Word of

God, "loved us, and gave himself for us." He became man, and offered himself as a sacrifice, and his "blood cleanseth from all sin." And

The Divine being who is the third in the glorious Trinity, and who is called the Holy Spirit, purifies the hearts of all believers and assimilates them to the moral likeness of God.

2. In connexion with the above great doctrines, we

Doctrine
of Sin.

take the following. Man is a fallen being estranged from God, sinful, miserable,—justly exposed to the Divine indignation on account of sin. His nature is in ruins;—intellect, will, affections, all are deeply injured. Sin is a fearful evil. It is utterly abominable,—eternally hateful, and ruinous.

3. God is infinitely holy. He is "light." "He cannot look upon iniquity." He is "a consuming fire." He is infinitely just. He therefore eternally hates sin; and must necessarily punish it.

Yet, He desires not the death of the sinner. He is

Doctrine of
Redemption.

"love." He desires that the sinner be saved. that is, pardoned and sanctified, and made happy.

But how can He, a just God, save sinful man? This is the problem of problems. If justice is to be manifested the sinner must perish; if love is manifested, the justice of God is sullied by leaving sin unpunished. All other religions are baffled in the solution of this problem. Christianity discloses the astonishing fact of this Son of God becoming man and suffering the punishment in place of sinners. This is the great central doctrine of Christianity. We can conceive nothing that could, in so glorious a manner, have revealed two infinitely important truths, 1st, that sin is a fearful evil, deserving of awful punishment; and 2nd, that God is infinitely compassionate and full of love. By the dying agonies of the Son of God, the fruits and

character of sin are exhibited in a more terrible light than they could have been by the destruction of the world. At the same time an irresistible appeal is made to every heart that is not steeled against every pure and tender feeling, and a most exalted conception of the Divine love is conveyed to us, through the channel by which love is best apprehended—the affections. Those were *real* agonies—bodily and mental sufferings, unutterably great;—and that the Son of God should have borne such for you, for me, is a thing never to be forgotten,—it is the most overwhelmingly wonderful truth that man knows. Let a man really believe this fact, and it affects his character for ever. Christianity, in virtue of this doctrine, is either the sublimest of truths, or the deepest of delusions;—it is not of earth,—it is either from heaven or from hell.

4. On the great question of a future existence, Christianity speaks with clearness and precision.
Future state, Resurrection. She informs us that we are not destroyed at death. The soul still lives, and will live for ever. But that is not all;—the body will be raised again and united to the soul. Natural Religion had expressed, with a hesitating voice, her belief in a future state of existence for the soul; but the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is confined to the Christian Revelation.*

5. Nor is it only new *ideas* that Christianity has introduced.
Novelty in the language of Christianity. The *language* in which she speaks of God, and man in his relations to God, is also new. The very name of *gospel* or *glad tidings*, is very peculiar, as denoting a religion. The terms *grace*, *salvation*, *righteousness*, *faith*, *justification*, *glorification*, *the spirit*, *the flesh*, and many others, have such new and remarkable significations attached to them, that, when the religion was first promulgated, there must

* See Appendix B.

have been some difficulty in understanding its phraseology.

Here, then, are wholly new ideas, and an almost wholly new sense is given to many terms. We cannot but be impressed with this wonderful fact. Real novelty in thought is by no means common. Seldom does the very great of our philosophers strike out an idea which is entirely original;—we can generally analyse it into well-known elements. The only originality we almost ever witness is the bringing of two or more old ideas into new combinations. But the great doctrines I have mentioned above, are really new. And they are confined to Christianity—there are no systems from which they could have been borrowed.

6. Take in connexion with the fact of the novelty of

Harmony of
the Christian
doctrines.

the doctrines, that of their beautiful harmony and mutual dependence. The dreams of a sick man may present many novelties in

thought; but the novelties are manifest absurdities,—they are inconsistent with each other. Not so the doctrines of Christianity. These constitute a system the parts of which all fit harmoniously into each other.

Now, this harmonious novelty is in itself a very powerful argument in favour of the truth of Christianity. The conception of the greatest poems that have ever been written, such as the *Paradise Lost* of Milton, involved the exercise of far less genius than would have been requisite for the invention of so vast and symmetrical a system of doctrine, if man had really invented it.

7. The preceding remarks will have convinced you of

Originality
of much of the
Christian
morality.

the remarkable originality of many of the doctrines of Christianity. We might in like manner notice the originality of much of the

Christian morality. Such commands as these; "Love your enemies," "Bless them that curse you," are equally new and striking. But we must hasten to another part of the subject.

8. Take into consideration here the character of Jesus

Character
of Jesus
Christ.

Christ. It is a character to which the whole world presents no parallel. It stands alone.

When we wish to express the highest merit to which the writers of the most wonderful genius have attained in the conception of human character, we say they are *true to nature*—that is, they have faithfully delineated man as he is. We look on men, and we look then on their description of men; and we find the picture to resemble the original. Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, lay claim to no higher praise than this. When Homer describes even the gods, he simply represents them as if they were exaggerated men;—they have human thoughts, feelings, passions, virtues, vices. When the sublime Milton would describe Deity, his genius fails him; and, as soon as he goes beyond what is written respecting God in the Bible, he is unable either to command our admiration or carry our conviction. But, in the case of Jesus Christ, we behold a character at once divine and human; and every thing which he says and does is entirely worthy of a nature so ineffably mysterious. The glory of Deity and the weakness of humanity in union! We venture to say that the very conception of such a character was beyond the human mind; and the perfectly harmonious and beautiful representation of His career on earth which is contained in the New Testament, is of itself a complete demonstration of the truth of Christianity. Let me earnestly intreat you, my young friend, deeply to study the life and character of Jesus Christ. Repeatedly have even the enemies of religion confessed that it is absolutely perfect. Cold surely, and dead to every pure and generous feeling must the heart be, that is not melted by the infinite loveliness of the whole character of this wonderful Being.*

* See Appendix C.

9. One very remarkable characteristic of Christianity

Mode in which
Christian doc-
trines and mor-
ality are incul-
cated. Facts.

is this, that it does not merely present the doctrines as expressed in words, but gives them also embodied in *facts*. It is a very old remark that what we only hear by the ear, makes a far less distinct impression on the mind than that which is exhibited to the eye. No description of the features of any person leaves an impression at all equal to that which is produced by seeing the person, or even seeing his portrait. Very similar to the difference between these two things, is the difference between merely hearing a truth or a duty expressed in words, and seeing the same truth or duty embodied in acts. If God should proclaim in words that He hates sin, it would make a certain impression; but the impression would be vastly stronger, if He were also to convey the same truth by a fact, such as inflicting severe punishment on account of sin. Or, if we should be told in words that God loves men, the statement would make a certain impression; but if we also witnessed an action, or a series of actions, exhibiting the same great verity, how immensely would the impression be deepened! So with duty;—if we are merely told that we ought to forgive our enemies, love all men, and so on, the impression on the mind is exceedingly slight and evanescent, compared to that which is produced by beholding that forgiveness and that love actually exercised by some one,—and the lesson will be peculiarly precious and instructive, if he who issues the precept is the person that sets us the example!

These are important principles. No religion save Christianity is formed in accordance with them; but it is remarkable to see how beautifully Christianity does accord with them. Philosophers and writers on Natural Religion may speak of God and His attributes,—but their statements are unintelligible to many—and are fitted to make an abiding

impression on none. Or, if they should inculcate the duty of loving our enemies, they might draw perhaps a pleasing picture,—but it would be shadowy, unsubstantial, phantom-like—an idea which the mind could with difficulty grasp. Philosophers convey their conceptions of God only in *words*; but mere words scarcely suffice even for educated men,—and for uneducated men they are wholly insufficient.

Now, in the Bible, there stands recorded a long and lofty succession of *events*—of *facts*—fitted visibly to exhibit the Divine character—the evil of sin—the real character of man, and things of similar importance. Man's duty, too, is exhibited by actions;—holiness and purity are held up to view in Jesus Christ, in a form at once so clear, commanding, and attractive, that the philosopher and the peasant alike may understand and feel the lesson. Very much of the Bible is history,—and the events recorded are admirably fitted to teach us deep and important truths.

Thus, then, we find that the mode of Divine Revelation adopted in the Bible is both entirely original, and in accordance with the truest philosophy. I trust you see the precise thing I mean to express. It is one thing to say, as was formerly done, that the doctrines conveyed are original and true. It is an additional thing to say that the *mode* of conveying them is original and profoundly wise. The latter is the assertion that is now made.

10. The practical aim of Christianity is one of its distinguishing features.

Christianity does not address merely the intellect. The truths it reveals bear on the heart and conduct. Christianity has precepts, too; and these all aim at influencing the heart, speech, and behaviour. Christianity in fact seeks the rectification of the entire nature of man, both in its outward and inward actings. Practically considered, Christianity is emphatically a life.—And her aims are wide

as the human race. She scorns not the meanest, she despairs not regarding the most abandoned, of the family of Adam; she seeks the restoration of all and each to God, and consequently to holiness and happiness.

Of this practical character other religious systems shew little trace. Most of them chiefly inculcate repetitions of external ceremonies, endless, meaningless, and useless. Most religions speak of pardon; but few, if any, except Christianity, recognize the necessity of the rectification of man's nature. Philosophers have spoken of raising a select few to the knowledge and love of truth; but they have spoken vaguely and incoherently. Of the mass of men they have almost always despaired: they have deemed them irrecoverably sunk in ignorance and vice.*

11. The practical *power* of Christianity is no less re-
Practical power. markable.

Its precepts and continual exhortations to holiness are fitted to exert a powerful practical influence. Its appeals to the affections are also many and constraining. And the truths it reveals are truths that come straight home to the heart; they touch the affections,—they awaken the mightiest principles of our nature, and make these propel us in the path of purity and obedience. He who believes Christianity *must* be powerfully affected by it. Were a condemned criminal, when he expected to be led to execution, suddenly to receive a full free pardon, we know that his heart could not but be deeply moved. Far more arousing still, are the disclosures of Christianity. She offers—or rather reveals God himself offering—not only pardon, but friendship,—nay far more, sonship. Her words then, if *believed*, are irresistible: they are “spirit and life.”

Other systems have not possessed the means of securing

* So the ancient philosophers, universally. It is difficult for modern unbelievers to avoid a more comprehensive spirit, after Christianity has both said and done so much for the most degraded.

this practical end even when they sought it. For example, other systems have represented man as standing to God in the relation of a servant to a master; let the servant do so much work, and the master will give so much pay. But Christianity—representing the relation which God seeks to establish, as that which subsists between a father and son—says; Receive forgiveness through Christ, and then love and serve your merciful God and Father. In short, other systems say; First comes work, and then pardon. Christianity says; First comes pardon, and then work. In this respect, as well as those formerly mentioned, Christianity is entirely original. In fact, she seems to turn things upside down. But, when we deeply reflect upon the subject, we see that the Christian system alone is in accordance with the real principles of our nature.

Briefly to sum up the argument of this letter. How can we explain this novelty, this marvellous originality, in the Christian religion—especially, when we see that the points distinguished for originality are equally characterized by profound wisdom and exquisite adaptation to the human mind? The first promulgators of Christianity were by no means endowed with transcendent and unequalled genius; they were simple, humble, unlettered men. Milton or Newton could not have invented such a system;—how then could Peter or John? The answer is, that man never did invent it. It was communicated to man by God himself—by that omniscient Being who fully knows the human heart—its necessities—its laws,—and who possesses infinite resources both of power and grace, so as perfectly to accommodate His measures to the requirements of our nature.

I am, &c.

LETTER X.

CHRISTIANITY COMPARED WITH OTHER SYSTEMS
THAT PROFESS TO BE REVELATIONS.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

WE have been comparing Christianity with that system which is called Natural Religion; and we have seen that Christianity is both in entire accordance with Natural Religion, and, at the same time, an important advance upon it. We come now to compare Christianity with other systems of religion that profess to be Revelations from God.

Much of what was said in the two last letters might be again introduced here. Some repetition may be unavoidable.

1. Christianity is distinguished from other professed Revelations by its tendency to honour and exalt God. His greatness—His holiness—His goodness—are clearly and majestically set forth. So are His government and providence—and His claim to the devoted obedience of His creatures. No taint of imperfection cleaves to Him. He is infinitely excellent and glorious. It is a fearful sin to oppose His blessed will.

2. Christianity is distinguished from other systems by its tendency to humble the pride of man. It tells him that he is a fallen being—ignorant, depraved, miserable, opposed to God,—and justly obnoxious to Divine displeasure.

3. Yet Christianity does not, like some erring sects of

Yet she seeks philosophers, vilify human nature. She to exalt him. speaks of its degradation always with sorrow, never with scorn.

Nor does she represent it as hopelessly degraded. She represents it as a structure once glorious, now ruined—but capable of restoration to a condition far surpassing its original glory. And she herself promises to effect this restoration in all who accept her offers.*

4. Christianity is distinguished by the deep views she

Her views of presents of the evil of sin,—and the so-
the evil of Sin. lemn warnings which she utters against it.

5. Christianity is distinguished by the importance she

Her views attaches to the necessity of expiation for
of Expiation. sin, and of a *great* expiation.

6. Christianity is distinguished by the importance she

Her views of attaches to the purification of the heart of
Sanctification. man.

7. Christianity is distinguished for being so little of a
ritual system, and so much of a *moral* one.

Christianity moral rather than ritual. —By a ritual system we mean one which

enjoins many rites and outward ceremonies as essential to religion, and as either being in themselves meritorious, or at least indispensable conditions of obtaining the Divine favour. For example, Hinduism abounds with particular prayers, washings, fastings, and so forth, which are enjoined as entirely necessary to salvation. Christianity has extremely little of all this. She tells us—and she often and solemnly repeats the lesson—that true religion is spiritual—that “God looketh on the heart.”†

* “It is dangerous to make a man see too clearly how like he is to the brutes, without shewing him his grandeur. It is also dangerous to let him see too clearly his grandeur without his vileness. It is still more dangerous to let him remain ignorant of both these things. But it is very useful to shew him both.” Pascal’s Thoughts, Vol. ii. p. 85. (Faugere’s Edit.)

† It is not contended that every religion which abounds in outward

8. Christianity is distinguished as being far more reserved than other religions, on certain questions.
 Reserve of Christianity.

You may perhaps be surprised at the mention of this as an evidence of its truth, since you justly regard the clear announcements that it makes on many important points of which other religions either say nothing, or speak incorrectly, as forming one of the strongest arguments in its support. Nevertheless, it is a very weighty argument. While, on some questions, Christianity speaks so plainly that no man can misunderstand her announcements, there are others on which she says nothing at all.

It is exceedingly interesting to observe what Christianity does not reveal.

She never professes to make us philosophers. She never undertakes to teach us science. She pronounces no judgment as to the various theories that have at different times been formed on such physical studies as geography, geology, anatomy, medicine, astronomy, &c. She is equally silent as to the mental sciences. The Bible is simply a book on Religion. Again, there are many questions connected even with Religion, that man would like to see answered, but on which the Bible maintains a profound silence. Whatever is connected with man's necessities and man's duties—whatever is of *practical* utility in religion, is inscribed, in characters of light, on the pages of the Bible; whatever is purely speculative and fitted only to gratify curiosity, is carefully withheld. This cannot have been by chance. There are hundreds of questions on which men, in all ages, have been anxious to acquire know-

ceremonies is false. Judaism did so. But the case of Judaism is not similar to that of Hinduism. Judaism was a preparatory system. Its rites were *typical* or predictive—showing both the nature and magnitude of coming Christianity. Moreover, it subordinated the ritual to the moral part of religion, by such declarations as this: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." (See *Davison on Prophecy*. Disc. iv.)

ledge, and equally anxious to communicate that knowledge when acquired. These are such as the following : The nature of the Divine existence—the mode in which the creation of the world could be effected—the connexion of the soul and body—the place of departed spirits, and their mode of existence—angels, their number, orders, residences, employments—the nature of the punishments of hell—the character and destination of other worlds. It is very natural for men to ask, and try to answer, such questions as these. The philosophy of Bacon, indeed, which now rules supreme in the universities of Europe, has taught many to dismiss such inquiries as too high and difficult—as beyond the reach of the human faculties,—and at the same time not practically useful; but, unless in the case of thoroughly educated men, the disposition to recur to them is singularly strong.

We know that, at the time when the New Testament was written, the ancients were exceedingly prone to speculate on such questions as these. In religious books, particularly, they continually occur. How astonishing their absence from the Bible ! how utterly inexplicable—unless the minds of the writers of the New Testament were either as philosophically disciplined as those of the thinkers of the nineteenth century, or else illuminated and directed by God Himself. But philosophers the writers of the New Testament were not,—nor can their silence on such questions be explained on any other principle than that of believing them to have been inspired.

There are also various problems of a purely metaphysical kind, which men have been most anxious to have resolved. One of these relates to the mode of reconciling the foreknowledge of all events by God, with the freedom of man to do or not do. Christianity never attempts to make us understand this mystery.

It would be easy to shew that on such points as those now specified, the various systems that profess to be

revelations, have run into minute and erroneous statements. For example, if you read the descriptions of Heaven and Hell which are contained in the Hindu, Pārsī, and Muhammadan books, you find that they all contradict each other, and in many points are revolting in the extreme.—In like manner, they often pronounce positively on deep metaphysical problems. For example, the Muhammadan creed erroneously inculcates *fatalism*.

I scarcely expect, my young friend, that this will at present appear to you to be very convincing as an argument for the truth of the Bible. Possibly, you may still think it would have been better, if the Bible had taught us science, as some of the Hindu Shāstras professedly do. But I am convinced that, as your own philosophical studies advance, you will become more and more persuaded of the force of the present argument. Even at present you will admit the truth of the two following propositions. First; the revelation by God of scientific truth which man has faculties sufficient to discover for himself, is unnecessary,—and therefore improbable :—Secondly; had the Bible been the production of uninspired men, it certainly would have embodied many of the opinions on physical and metaphysical questions which prevailed in their age and country; and these opinions would certainly, in many points, have been erroneous.

The absence of mere philosophic theory from the Bible is, for these reasons, an argument in favour of its being a revelation from God.*

Immediately connected with these considerations is the following, viz.

* Some have tried to evade this conclusion by saying that the Jews were not a scientific or philosophic people, and that scientific points could hardly be introduced into their writings. But all nations, however rude, have their physical theories—their explanations of celestial and terrestrial phenomena. Metaphysical questions, also, too deep for man to settle, are often discussed by the rudest communities.

It is a very remarkable fact that errors in science appear in the earliest Christian authors who come after the New Testament writers. Clement tumbles where Paul walks erect.

9. Christianity differs from other professed Revelations

Christianity in this, that it is consistent with modern
consistent with science. scientific discoveries. We had already occasion to mention this consistency of Christianity with science. We now add the fact of Christianity being the only professed Revelation that possesses this character.

All other religions fail here. By telling us so much on scientific points, they have multiplied immensely the tests of their own character, and have laid themselves completely open to detection. Their geography, astronomy, botany, zoology, anatomy, medicine, &c. abound in errors. And necessarily so,—unless the writers had been inspired.

10. Christianity differs from other professed Revelations

Christianity in being fitted to be a universal religion.
fitted to be universal. It professes to be so ; and it is so. The philosopher and the unlettered peasant—the rich and the poor—male and female—European, Asiatic, African, American—are equally addressed by it ; it can rule in the palaces of kings, and it has been the great civilizer of the savage inhabitants of New Zealand and Polynesia. It is adapted to all understandings ; it comes home to all hearts. It has elevated the mind of a Newton ; it has cheered the dying bed of a child.

We need hardly wait to prove that this is an important mark of a true religion. Only one system of doctrine can be true ; it is inconceivable that God should reveal one system in Asia, and other systems, contradictory of the former, in Europe or Africa.

11. Christianity differs from other professed Revelations

It has evidences fitted in presenting evidences that are fitted to all
for all. minds.

Christianity does not tell us to believe without proof. She does not tell us to follow implicitly the customs of our fathers. She commands us to be acquainted with the reasons of our belief. And the proofs of the truth of Christianity are

so many and so various, that some portion of them at least is adapted to every understanding. Rational conviction of the truth of his religion is attainable by every Christian however humble.

These are the most important points in which Christianity is unlike other professed Revelations. I shall now say a few words respecting the most celebrated religions of

Ancient systems of Religion.

Heathen antiquity—especially those that prevailed in ancient Greece and Rome.

The gods of Greece and Rome have been reckoned as not less in number than thirty thousand.

It has been already mentioned that these gods were in character simply exaggerated men, with human virtues and human vices on an enlarged scale. The representation of the gods, as given in the great poet Homer, is exceedingly repulsive; and some have asked, not without reason, whether a man possessed of the genius of Homer, could really have believed in such a theology. Zeus, or Jupiter, “the king of gods and men,” has not a single attribute worthy of the Supreme Being; even his power is not unlimited. The gods in Homer eat and drink; quarrel and fight; and are sometimes so merry that “unextinguishable laughter” shakes the skies. They are capricious, sensitive, jealous, revengeful: they are implacable towards those who slight them, but support their favourites through right and wrong.—Yet this was the national belief of Greece.

Greek Religion.

Such a system could not possibly remain unquestioned, as the nation advanced in knowledge and refinement. Commerce, intercourse with foreign nations, and the progress of philosophy wrought a great change in Greece. The Greeks had naturally a deep attachment to religious rites; and the common people, especially in the country districts, continued believers in the ancient system until Christianity supplanted it. But the philosophers speedily laid

Greek philosophy. aside all faith in the popular system. Thus Xenophanes* denounced the accounts of the deities which were generally received, as "godless fables." Others spoke as strongly. But while the philosophers saw the absurdity of the popular system, they were unable to substitute any thing better. They destroyed; they could not build up. The philosopher now mentioned frankly admitted he knew nothing about God.

The description of the Greek philosophers given by our great poet Milton, is thoroughly just.

The first and wisest of them all professed
To know this only that he nothing knew;
The next to fabling fell and smooth conceits;
A third sort doubted all things, though plain sense;
Others in virtue placed felicity,
But virtue joined with riches and long life;
In corporal pleasure he, and careless ease;
The Stoic last in philosophic pride,
By him called wisdom.—
Much of the soul they talk, but all awry;
And in themselves seek wisdom; and to themselves
All glory arrogate—to God give none.†

The morality of Greece did not improve under the teaching of the philosophers. The manners in Homer's time were rude and coarse, and in many respects morally objectionable; but those of subsequent ages, when taste and art, as well as philosophic thought, had attained their highest degree of refinement, were far worse. With morality, patriotism and public spirit died. Even the population died out. What had been flourishing cities were reduced to petty villages; and shocking immorality was "the cancer that ate into the life of Greece."‡

Not less grievous was the state of things in Rome. The

* About 534 B. C. Philosophy commenced with Thales about a century earlier.

† Paradise Regained, Book iv. The philosophers thus described are Socrates—Plato—the Pyrrhonists—Academics and Peripatetics—Epicurus—the Stoics.

‡ See Thirlwall's History of Greece, Vol. viii. p. 464.

Roman
Religion.

Romans copied the Greeks in religion and manners. Cato the Censor used to warn his countrymen against the Greeks as "the parents of every vice;" but his remonstrances were in vain. Greek philosophy, Greek views on religion, more and more pervaded Rome; and the coarser Romans plunged into vice with a hardihood of which the Greeks were scarcely capable. Philosophy repeated the course she had pursued in Greece; she pulled down the old superstition and left the nation without faith in any God. During the two centuries that preceded the birth of Christ, infidelity and immorality spread on all sides like a pestilence. The leading men of Rome became inconceivably flagitious,—and those of the highest intellect, such as Julius Cæsar, were often among the most hopelessly abandoned.

Again, cruelty was characteristic of those religions. Human sacrifices were openly offered in Rome as late as the reign of Augustus Cæsar. Wars were conducted with dreadful ferocity. Slavery was almost universal; and the wretched slaves were treated like beasts rather than men. Public shows were often held, in which gladiators encountered and slaughtered each other, and both men and women assembled in immense numbers to gaze on the bloody spectacle. Sometimes more than 20,000 men perished in these games during one month.—No institution existed for the relief of the sick and poor.

Every reader of history knows that, at the time when the Christian religion was instituted, the state of religion and morality in Pagan nations was fearfully low. The Greek and Roman authors sorrowfully complained that the character of the people was as grossly corrupt as that of the deities they worshipped.*

* For some striking facts on this subject, the student may consult Tholuck "On the nature and moral influence of Heathenism." Leland on the "Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation" is a store-house of unanswerable facts, connected with the Greek and Roman systems.

We need not dwell at any length on the systems of Egyptian religion. The religion of Egypt soon ran into brute-worship in its most degrading forms. Not content with adoring cat-headed and jackal-headed divinities, they adored the cats and jackals themselves. The Egyptian worship shocked even the Greeks and Romans; and their writers spoke derisively of "mad Egypt."*

Nor need we dwell on the systems of Assyria and Babylon. Magic, divination, and sorcery, characterized them in a preeminent degree. They were also fearfully immoral; and the worship of the "queen of heaven" in particular was, as the historian Herodotus indignantly remarks "in the highest degree abominable."†

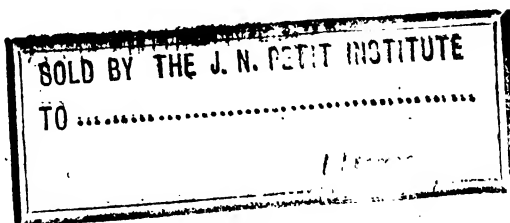
The Phrygian and other systems of Lesser Asia, were Religions of wild and frantic to an inconceivable degree. Lesser Asia.

The religions of the Celtic and German nations were Celtic and German Religions. the irrational beliefs and bloody rites of wild barbarians.

I am, &c.

* So Juvenal. He had been in Egypt and had seen the worship.

† See Clio 199. Also 181.



LETTER XI.

HINDUISM. EXAMINATION OF ITS EVIDENCES.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

It will be useful to employ some time in comparing the evidences of Christianity with those of the three other great systems of religion which exist in this country, viz. Hinduism, Pársism and Muhammadanism. Let us commence with Hinduism.

We divided the chief evidences in favour of Christianity into external and internal,—and the division is equally applicable to the evidences of all religions.

External Evidence.

We commence, then, by asking: What is the external evidence in favour of Hinduism?

In answering that question, we have first to decide what Hinduism is. In examining any religion whatever, the first inquiry must be, *What is the religion*,—and then comes the question, *Is the religion true*. What, then, is the system which we call Hinduism? The answer is far from easy. The Hinduism of Bengal or Madras is not the same as the Hinduism of Bombay; the systems even of neighbouring provinces, such as Kánnadá and Maháráshtra, are not quite the same;—the Hinduism of the Bráhmans is very different from the Hinduism of the Kunbís or Kolís. The best answer to the question is this: Genuine Hinduism is that which is contained in the Shástras. The Shástras are books supposed by the Hindus to be divinely inspired; and

what is not in them may be held to be but local or temporary.

The next question is, What are the Shāstras? The general answer to this would be; The four Vedas, the six philosophical Shāstras, and the eighteen Purānas. There are many Sanskrit works which are not included among these; but the writings now enumerated are the peculiarly sacred and accredited books of the Hindus.

We shall examine these books in the same manner as we examined the Bible. First, then, let us inquire into their antiquity.

I. The age of the Hindu sacred books.

It is exceedingly difficult to determine the date of any of the Hindu Shāstras. Learned men have repeatedly endeavoured to fix the age of the most important of them; but their widely different conclusions leave us in much uncertainty on the whole subject. The Vedas have been supposed by some to be perhaps as old as the fourteenth century before Christ; but others equally learned, have believed them to be scarcely older than the seventh century before Christ. Here is a difference of 700 years. The age of the Purānas is also uncertain; on the whole, it is probable that the most ancient of them may be about one thousand years old (having been probably composed about the eighth or ninth century after Christ),—and the most recent ones, only four or five hundred years old. On the age of the six philosophical Shāstras it is also exceedingly difficult to decide. Thus, although we are certain that some of them (such as the Vedas) are very ancient, we are left in exceeding uncertainty as to the dates of the Hindu sacred books.*

* On the whole the following dates may be held as approximation to the truth on this very perplexing subject.

The Hymns (or Sanhitā) of the Rīg Veda were collected about 1,200 or 1,300 years B. C.

The Brāhmana of the Rīg Veda was written 700 or 800 B. C.

II. With regard to their genuineness.

It is difficult to determine whether they are nearly the same as when they were first composed. Are the *Shāstras* genuine? Probably, the Vedas have been very little altered, at least for a very long period. Still, even in the Vedas, alterations of an important kind seem to have been introduced at some time. Nearly the entire *Sāma* Veda is found in the *Rig Veda*; but the readings of the two differ very considerably. Learned men have discussed the question whether, in these cases, the text of the *Rig Veda*, or that of the *Sāma*, is the older and more genuine.* In like manner much of the *Atharva Veda* is in the *Rig Veda*; but the deviations of the former from the latter are so important, that a learned writer calls them "capricious inversions and alterations."†

The *Purānas* certainly have been greatly corrupted. Scarcely any two Manuscript copies of a *Purāna* agree. Professor H. H. Wilson thinks the *Purānas* are corrupt. "there may have been an earlier class of

Kapila, one of the earliest philosophers, 600 or 700 B. C.

Manu's Dharmashāstra—500 or 600 B. C.

Heroic poems (*Rāmāyana*, *Mahābhārata*.) 200 or 300 B. C.

The *Upanishads*, mostly, are later than the heroic poems.

The *Purānas* are still later.

Prof. Wilson thinks that the *Vishnu Purāna* was composed about the middle of the eleventh century after Christ. (See Wilson's *Vishnu Purāna*, p. lxxii.)

The *Bhāgavat Purāna* is later; perhaps five or six centuries old.

But on this question it is desirable that we keep in mind the statement of Prof. Wilson: "In dealing with Hindu chronology, we have no trustworthy landmarks, no fixed eras, no comparative history to guide us. In proposing the dates, therefore, nothing more than conjecture is intended; and it may be very wide of the truth." (Wilson's *Rig Veda*, p. xlvi.)

Most of the dates given above agree with those of Professor Wilson.

If they be in any case erroneous, the error probably lies in our ascribing too high an antiquity to the books.

* Benfey's *Sāma Veda*. Introduction.

† Dr. R. Roth "On the Literature and History of the Veda."

Purānas, of which those which we now have, are but the partial and adulterated representations."* In that case, the real Purānas are irrecoverably lost, and those we now possess are spurious imitations. A Purāna frequently gives statements as to the size and contents of the various other Purānas, but these accounts are often quite irreconcilable with each other. Thus it is utterly absurd to talk of the genuineness of the Purānas. No man can be sure that he has the right text; in fact, every man may be pretty sure that he has it not.

One very interesting circumstance respecting the Christian Scriptures is the fact of their having been translated at an early period into various languages. (See above, Letter III.) We have seen that we can establish both their antiquity and their genuineness by means of these translations. But we have nothing of the same kind in the case of the Hīndu sacred writings. It was not till the time of the Emperor Akbar that any of them were translated into a foreign language;—in Akbar's time, some of them were rendered into Persian. None of these versions is 300 years old,—whereas the translation of the Old Testament into Greek was prepared more than 2,100 years ago.

III. With regard to the general credibility of the history contained in the Hīndu Shāstras.

Are the Shāstras credible? It is not supported by external evidence.

1. We know nothing of the character and intentions of the writers, except what may be gathered from their compositions,—nothing of their situation or circumstances,—nothing as to the publication of their works, and the persons by whom, and the manner in which, these were received.

2. No testimony in their favour can be adduced from the writers of other countries.

* Vishnu Purāna, p. iv.

The facts related in the Purānas (which profess to give us history) are not corroborated by those ^{They are inconsistent with Greek writings;} Greek writers who describe the invasion of India by Alexander the Great, and the transactions subsequent to that event.

A Greek kingdom long existed in Bactria, on the confines of India,—but with its known history ^{And the Bactrian history;} the Purānas do not agree.

We have also some Chinese works relating to India,—^{And with Chinese writings;} but the accounts which they contain of India frequently oppose the statements of the Purānas.

The Musalmāns have had some connexion with India from the end of the seventh century of the Christian era, and exceedingly close connexion from the time of Mahmud of Ghazni in the end of the tenth. ^{And with Musalmān writings;} But the Musalmān writers do not corroborate the assertions of the Purānas, several of which were composed after the Musalmāns had invaded India.

It is not here meant that there are no facts mentioned in the Purānas which are not mentioned in foreign writers. But the points in which foreign writers contradict the Purānas are far more numerous than those in which they agree with them.

3. Again, as to monumental evidence. There are many inscriptions on rocks in various parts of India,—there are pictures in caves,—there are vast numbers of coins found both in India and the adjacent countries (particularly around Cabul). ^{And with existing monuments.} It is often absolutely impossible to reconcile the statements of the Purānas with what is inscribed on those rocks, plates, caves, and coins. So much is this the case, that every Orientalist speaks of the Purānas as containing not real history, but mythology, that is to say, fable.

4. The same thing is true of the Rāmāyana and Ma-

Rámáyana and Mahábhárata are poetic fictions hábhárata, which are accounted very precious historical records by the Hindus. These are mere poems, in which facts are fantastically altered and embellished at the pleasure of the writer.

All the remarks which we have made regarding the history given in the Puránas, apply also to these poems.

Thus, then, the credibility of the history contained in the Hindu writings cannot be established. On the contrary, the statements are often demonstrably and ridiculously untrue.

IV. With regard to the miraculous evidence in favour

Examination of Hinduism.
of Hindu mi-
racles.

Certainly, miracles in abundance are given in the Hindu books. These are filled with accounts of the most amazing occurrences. But the question is ; Did such things really happen ? Let us examine the proofs.

1. The Hindus are, and have always been, excessively credulous. They believe almost any strange story you choose to tell them. They believe that miracles are still wrought at almost every temple in India. Nothing would be easier than for a clever unscrupulous man to obtain the reputation of a miracle-worker among such a people.

2. The people whom the Hindus suppose to have performed miracles, did not introduce a new system of religion by means of them. They did not perform the miracles, as an evidence of the truth of doctrines which were greatly disliked by the Hindus.

They professed to work miracles among a people who wished and expected to see miracles; and, when the supposed miracles had any connexion with religion, they were performed in support of a system already established and popular.

You see how this fact weakens the evidence in support of the miracles. Were any one now to come forward and

profess to perform miracles in confirmation of Hinduism, he would be received with general acclamation. And so it would have been of old. When men *wish* to believe a thing, they are very easily satisfied with its evidence.

3. The testimony which can be adduced in proof of the
 No sufficient miracles is wholly insufficient to shew that
 testimony is adduced in they were ever really performed.
 their support.

The testimony of the Hindus is insufficient for this object. The utter impossibility of discovering the time, the place, the circumstances, &c. in which the books which relate the miracles, were written and published, is a conclusive argument against receiving them as witnesses. The erroneousness of the Hindu books in matters of ordinary history has been already clearly established;—how then can we receive their testimony for the miracles? This would be the same thing as receiving, in a court of justice, the evidence of a man convicted of falsehood.

Again, we have not the testimony of any but Hindus in favour of the miracles. Neither Greeks nor Romans, neither Parsís nor Musalmáns, corroborate the Hindu statements on the subject. This is an important fact.

4. The miracles recorded in the Hindu books are extravagant. They are outrageous; there is
 The miracles are extravagant too much miracle. For example, the monkey-god, Hanumán, being afraid that the morn would dawn before he had gathered plants on a certain mountain, seized the sun, and, placing the mighty orb under his arm, carried it off to the camp of Ráma.

To construct the mound between Rameshwar and Ceylon he brought mountains, to cast into the sea,—he brought millions at a time—a mountain on the tip of each hair of his body.

Priyavrat drove his chariot seven times round the world

and by the indentation of the wheel scooped out the seven concentric oceans.

Agastya swallowed one of those oceans at three sips, and gave it out again in a salt state.

Krishna, to protect the inhabitants of Gokula from the rain, lifted the "chief of mountains," Govarddhana, "from its stony base," and for seven days and nights held it with one hand—on the tip of his finger, as is generally said—over their heads as an umbrella.

Thousands of such extraordinary stories might be quoted. The wonders recorded in the Hindu books resemble, as was said before, a sick man's dreams.

5. Another most remarkable thing is, that beings who can at one moment accomplish such stupendous miracles, are at another wholly impotent.

The miraculous narratives are inconsistent.

Shiva, having cut off one of Brahmā's heads with his thumb-nail, was cursed by that god, and could not disengage the head from his hand. Rendered powerless by the same curse, he flees before a frightful demon to the ends of the earth.

Vishnu is cursed by Bhrigu, and condemned to ten mortal births.* In one of these—that of Krishna—he per-

* These are the celebrated ten *Avatāras*; they were occasioned by the curse of an angry sage, not voluntarily undertaken by Vishnu from a feeling of compassion. And yet the avatārs are elsewhere mentioned in the most laudatory strains as wondrous proofs of Divine mercy. Thus there is a celebrated passage of the Bhagavad Gītā, which says:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ॥
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहं ॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृतां ॥
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

That is: *Whensoever religion fades and irreligion prevails, then I produce myself. For the preservation of holy men, and the destruction of evil doers, for the establishment of religion, I am born from age to age.*

These two views of the origin of the avatārs are quite irreconcilable.

forms, as already noticed, mighty and marvellous feats, yet becomes impotent under the Bráhma's curse. When he was entertaining the sage Durvása with hospitality, some particles of meal happened to fall on the foot of the sage, who thereupon, cursing Krishna, foretold that he must die by a violent death. Krishna, accordingly, was accidentally killed by a hunter, who mistook his foot for a deer.

Nahusha had raised himself to be king of heaven, when he happened merely to discompose a lock of Agastya's hair. Thereupon the sage cursed him, and in a moment turned him into a snake.

Brahmá, again, is cursed by Shiva, and deprived of temples, offerings, and worship.

V. With regard to the argument from Prophecy.

1. One of the Puránas is called the Bhavishya Purána,

and, according both to its name and the
Examination
of Hindu pro-
phecies. account given of it by the Matsya Purána, it
 ought to be a book of prophecies. We have,

however, no evidence that any such prophetic book exists. The work that is known under that designation, is not prophetic. Both the Bhavishya and the Bhavishyottarra are little more than manuals of religious rites.

2. Passages that look like prophecy are indeed com-

mon in the Hindu books. For example, in
Four Shá-
stras seem to
speak of fu-
ture events. the Vishnu Purána, Book IV. Chap. 21, 22,
 23, 24, an account is given of the kings who
 should reign over India from the time of king Parí-
 kshit, in whose days the Purána professes to have been
 composed. And so in three other Puránas.* An uneducat-
 ed Hindu might no doubt regard this as satisfactory evi-
 dence that the Shástras contain real prophecies. But all

* The Váyu, Matsya, and Bhágavata. See Wilson's Vishnu Purána, p. x.

learned men are agreed that these passages were written *after* the events which they relate had actually taken place. Before they could be considered as really prophetic, it would be necessary to establish the time when these four Purānas were composed. The Brāhmans *say* they are very old, but are unable to adduce a shadow of proof in support of the assertion.

3. Again, we find that in these professed prophecies

These seem- the Purānas flatly contradict each other.
ing prophecies
are contradic- They differ as to the names of the kings;
tory. they differ as to their number; they differ

as to their order. Nor is it possible to make their statements harmonize. Two contradictory assertions cannot both be true; and, in this case, we have at least four contradictory prophecies.

4. Again, as these Purānas *professedly* record the

They omit
the most im-
portant points
of Indian his-
tory.

future history of India down to the end of the world, and dwell pretty fully on the earlier invasions of the Musalmāns, it is very strange that scarcely any thing is said of the Muhammadan Emperors of Hindustān, and nothing at all either of the Portuguese, or of the extensive dominion which the English have established in India, and the momentous consequences social, political, moral, and religious, which have flowed, and will flow, from that dominion.

5. Again, nothing is said of the rest of the world. But

They refer
solely to India.

is it possible either that the events that were to happen throughout the rest of Asia, all Europe, all Africa, and all America, were of no consequence,—or that they were to have no connexion with India?

6. Lastly, the prophecies are opposed to facts. We

They are false
prophecies in
many points.

read thus. "Wealth and piety will decrease day by day, until the world will be wholly depraved," "The people unable to bear

the heavy burdens imposed on them by their avaricious sovereigns, will take refuge among the valleys of the mountains, and will be glad to live on wild honey, herbs, roots, fruits, flowers, and leaves." "No man's life will exceed three and twenty years." At the last, the *Kalki Avatár* will appear. "He will destroy all Mlechhas [foreigners], and thieves, and all whose minds are devoted to iniquity."* As all Europeans are among the unfortunate beings whom the *Kalki Avatár* is to destroy, you cannot suppose that we think the deed prophesied in the last sentence, to be either just or probable. The other quotations are equally inconsistent with fact.

And, as the *Vishnu Purána* *professedly* teaches science as well as religion, how does it happen that not a word is said of the splendid scientific discoveries that have been made, and will be made? Why nothing of those applications of science to practical purposes, that seem, as it were, to annihilate space and time?

Again, is it not strange that, when the early successors of *Paríkshit* are so fully enumerated, the kings, and emperors, and warriors, that have flourished in India for the last six hundred years, are not mentioned at all; and that the whole history of India, from about the thirteenth century to the very end of the world, is compressed into a few sentences?

The only answer that can be given to such questions is, that, as no uninspired man can see far-distant events, the authors of the *Puránas* wisely took care to say as little as possible respecting them.

VI. The immense extent of the Hindu books that
 Immense extent profess to be inspired, is a remarkable
 of the *Shástras*. feature of Hinduism.

The Bible of the Christians is not large in size,—nor would it answer the purpose of a guide to mankind, if it were. The *Vedas*, *Shástras*, and *Puránas* are immensely

* These passages are literally extracted from the *Vishnu Purána*.

extensive. The Vedas probably contain 30,000 long verses.* The Purānas contain at least 400,000 shlokas or 1,600,000 lines, not including the minor, or Upa Purānas.† The six philosophical Shāstras are also immensely voluminous. Probably no Brāhman in India has read and understood one-fiftieth part of the books which he esteems inspired.

This appears to possess considerable force as an argument against their inspiration. It certainly does so, if the books are to be studied, as the Brāhmans enjoin, in the Sanskrit language; for, in that case, it is utterly impossible for any one to peruse more than a very insignificant portion of the sacred writings.

These remarks will suffice for the external evidence of Hinduism. Let us now proceed to consider the internal.

Internal Evidence.

I. One great and decisive argument against the inspiration of the Hindu Shāstras, is the fact that they are irreconcilably opposed to each other.

The Vedas are opposed to the Upanishads‡ and the Purānas; the six philosophical Shāstras disagree with these and with each other; the Purānas are diametrically and bitterly opposed to each other on many important questions.

In fact, the Hindu writings are as much at variance with each other, as they represent the gods to be. The religion of the Vedas is little more than the worship of elements; and the gods which are chiefly worshipped in modern days, are scarcely mentioned in them at all. Idolatry, or image-worship, is not sanctioned in the Vedas; whereas, it is now universal among the Hindus. In certain books, Hinduism

* Roth "on the Literature and History of the Veda."

† Wilson's Vishnu Purāna, p. xiv.

‡ The Upanishads are philosophical treatises, appended to the Vedas properly so called.

seems nothing but polytheism; in other books, it is entirely pantheistic. Scarcely any story is consistently related in two different Purānas. In fact, the contradictions are innumerable. I shall not enlarge on this subject, as no educated Hindu will deny the assertion,

II. Another unanswerable argument against the Hindu

They are opposed to Natural Religion. sacred books is this, that they are often entirely opposed to Natural Religion. They are opposed to Natural Religion both

in the doctrines and the duties they inculcate.

1. The idea of one God, a pure spiritual being, the

In their doctrines regarding God. Creator and Preserver of all things, is exceedingly unlike their idea of God. When they are polytheistic, they acknowledge 330,000,000

of divinities; when pantheistic, they identify God with the universe. Generally, they hold that the universe is brought out of God, not created by Him.—The glorious attributes of God they also deny. We may say they deny all of these, but they especially deny His holiness. They speak of the Supreme Being as existing in one state *without attributes*, and in another as *possessed of attributes*. The attributes they ascribe to him are unworthy of Deity. He is possessed, they say, not only of the attribute of *truth*, but of those of *passion* and of *darkness*. If we should admit that the attribute of *passion* does not necessarily degrade Deity, yet that of *darkness* is wholly inconsistent with it. For darkness, according to the Hindu definition, is “the root of folly, delusion, lust, and pride.” The attribute of Holiness is thus obliterated; that of Wisdom, also, is denied.

The gods that spring from the Supreme (and yet are generally conceived to be still identified with him) lie, commit adultery, are envious, revengeful, and full of vices.

The histories of Brahma, Indra, Krishna, and other gods, are disgusting to a pure and honourable mind; I dare not pollute my page with the recital of their flagitious deeds.

Were such things as are ascribed to the gods, to be committed by human beings, every one of us would be struck with horror.

2. The doctrines of the Hindu books regarding man are often entirely opposed to Natural Religion.

The Hindus generally say that the soul of man is literally
And regard- a part of God. It sprung from Him; and
ing man; will be reunited to Him, as a drop of water
mingles with the ocean. Here, it passes through a long suc-
cession of births. Sometimes it appears in a human form;
at other times in the form of a beast, or a bird, or a fish, or
a plant, or even a stone,—These views are entirely opposed
to what writers on Natural Religion teach.

3. The Hindu doctrine respecting sin is greatly op-
And regard- posed to Natural Religion. Sin, according
ing sin; to the Hindus, is properly *self-consciousness*,
i. e. the apprehension of one's self as different from God.
Here, then, is a fundamental error of a fearful kind.—In
general, sin is spoken of as consisting in ceremonial defile-
ment, or in the neglect of some of the innumerable rites
inculcated by Hinduism.

4. Connected with this error as to the nature of sin, is
And regarding an error as to the mode of its removal. Cere-
Atonement. monial observances are supposed to remove
even moral guilt. The repetition of the name of God with
the lips (even if the heart should be entirely regardless)
atones for sin. The waters of the Ganges, Godāvari, &c.
wash away sin. Eating the five products of the cow cleans-
es from sin. And so on;—the ceremonial rites of
Hinduism for the removal of sin are endless.

No impression is left by such observances, respect-
ing the exceeding demerit of sin,—or the holiness, and
love, of God. Contrast this with the humbling and sanctify-
ing tendency of the Christian doctrine of the atonement
made by Jesus Christ for the sins of men!

5. Many institutions of Hinduism are entirely opposed to Natural Religion.

Take the caste-system as an example. Never was
Many vicious institutions. tyranny more complete and humiliating than
 that which the Bráhmans exercise over the
 lower castes.

The whole treatment of women is, in like manner, despotic and unjust. The dreadful practice of Satí, or burning widows, is also commended in various Shástras.

Marriages are permitted without the intelligent consent of either party: and a second marriage is forbidden to a widow, even though her husband should die before she is of age. (Manu v. 162.)

Self-murder,* as a religious rite, is encouraged in various cases.

6. Lying, perjury, theft, are in certain cases permitted

Vicious precepts. in the Shástras.

"Whenever the death of a man of any of the four castes would be occasioned by true evidence, falsehood may be spoken; it is even preferable to truth." (Manu viii. 104.)

"To women†—at a proposal of marriage,—in the case of grass or fruit eaten by a cow—of wood taken for sacrifice—or of a promise made for the preservation of a Bráhman, it is no ‡ sin to take a light oath." (Manu viii. 112.)

III. Another most powerful argument against the Hindu books is the fact of their containing an
The shástras contain gross errors in science. immense number of errors in matters of
 science.

The geography and astronomy contained in the Puránas are outrageously absurd. A different system of astronomy

* It is still practised in W. India, and perhaps still more so in the eastern and northern parts of the country.

† The English version, following the commentary, adds "at a time of dalliance." But the words are not in the original.

‡ The English adds the qualifying epithet "deadly." But we adhere to the original.

is contained in the *Siddhántas*; but it is also erroneous,—it is what we call the Ptolemaic system. It represents the Earth as being the centre of the system, and at rest.

The medicine and anatomy of the Hindu books abound in errors. Their chemistry is still worse.

Instead of history and chronology, the Shástras contain childish mythology and fable.

Indeed, with the exception of the mathematics, the logic, the rhetoric, and a small part of the medicine, the Hindu science is full of errors.*

This is a conclusive argument against the inspiration of the Hindu books.

IV. A very strong argument against Hinduism is, that it is a religion limited to Hindus.

Hinduism
is limited to
Hindus.

It throws obstacles in the way of proselytes.

It cannot extend to foreign countries.

But, if God is one, truth is one;—and if Hinduism be true in India, it must be true in England. Mankind are all brothers—children of one father;—they ought to be united together in heart, and worship God in holy, happy fellowship. Christianity tells us they ought to do so, and that it

* We cannot afford space for examples of the scientific errors of the Shástras. They are endless. We may merely refer to the absurd geography of the Puránas. See Vishnu Purána, Book ii. This world is composed of 7 concentric islands, or continents, which are separated from each other by as many seas, consisting of very different kinds of liquids.

Jambu dwipa is in the centre. It is circular. It is surrounded by the ocean of salt water (Lavana).

Next is Plaksha dwipa, which surrounds the ocean of salt water, and is itself surrounded by the ocean of sugar-cane juice (Ikshu).

Next follow Shálmali, Kusha, Krauncha, Sháka, and Pushkara, dwipas; and these are respectively encircled by the oceans of wine (Surá), of clarified butter, or ghee (Sarpi), curds (Dadhi), of milk (Dugdha); and of fresh water (Jala).

Beyond all these, is a continent of gold.

Beyond this, is a chain of mountains called Loká loka.

Beyond this, is a land of darkness.

Beyond this is the shell of the great egg.

shall one day actually be done ; Hinduism declares that they ought not, and abhors the idea of all men being brothers, and worshipping God in union.

V. It could easily be demonstrated that Hinduism almost necessarily produces immorality in the mind and conduct of its professors.

Hinduism
is immoral in
tendency.

The example of the gods demoralizes Hindus ; for it is an acknowledged principle in mental philosophy that the worshipper necessarily becomes like the object worshipped. Again, many of the acts permitted or enjoined are immoral ; and the repetition of such acts must decidedly implant an immoral character in the worshipper. Hinduism is not, either theoretically or practically, a system of purification for the human mind. The spirit, struggling to cleanse itself from evil thoughts and feelings, receives no sympathy and no assistance from Hinduism ; it is only plunged deeper in the mire of corruption, if it trust its deceitful advices. Alas ! how little have the Hindu writers comprehended man—his condition—his hopes—his sorrows—his necessities !—This is a most grievous defect. Even if the other arguments against Hinduism could be answered (which, however, they cannot)—this alone would prove it to be merely an invention of man.

I need not, my young friend, prolong this discussion. The preceding remarks on the External and Internal Evidences of Hinduism will suffice to show how utterly unsubstantial and shadowy are the grounds for regarding Hinduism as a Divine Revelation. We may safely assert that no Hindu who is acquainted with history and the rules of right reasoning, and whose moral perceptions are not grievously impaired, can believe in the inspiration of the Shástras.

I am &c.

NOTE.

The remarks which have been made on Hinduism have chiefly referred to the popular system—the form of the religion that now prevails

among the mass of the community. But in addition to the popular system (which we may, with sufficient accuracy, call the Puranic) there are at least two other forms of Hinduism, viz. the Primitive and the Philosophic. The former is given in the Vedas; the latter in the six *darshanas* or philosophical systems, which are again nearly reducible to three—the Sāṅkhya, the Nyāya, and the Vedānta. A short notice of the Primitive and Philosophic systems will naturally be looked for in a work professing to discuss the evidences of Hinduism.

The Vedas.

The Vedas are four in number. According to Native arrangement a Veda contains three chief parts—the Sanhitā or Hymns, the Brāhmaṇa or Ritual, and the Upanishads.* (The two latter are not always clearly separated). Probably the Upanishads are later than the Sanhitās by at least one thousand years. The theologies of these two things are exceedingly different. When we speak of the Vedas we here mean the Sanhitās,—which alone contain the primitive religion of the Hindus.

The word for God in the Veda is देवः (devah). It is derived from *div* : or *dya*, to shine. The idea of God in Primitive Hinduism was essentially connected with *light*, and particularly with the phenomena of the bright, shining heaven. Hinduism was originally Nature-worship,—a deification of natural phenomena.

In the Vedas the highest god is Indra,—the deified firmament. The second is Varuna, who, in the Purāṇas, is the god of the waters, but, in the Vedas, the extreme vault of heaven, encompassing the sky. The third god is Agni, or fire.† Each of these three gods has a wife;—the names are Indrānī, Varunānī, and Agnāyī.

Next in importance are the deities of Light, viz. the Sun, the Dawn, and the two Ashvina, or beams that accompany the dawn.

The Winds come next.

Vishnu is associated with Indra, but inferior to him. He is the shining firmament.

The Earth is a goddess.

The Waters are goddesses.

These are the chief divinities of the Vedas.

So far as we know, the names of Shiva or Mahādeva, Durgā, Rāma, Krishna, Kālī, do not occur as deities. Rudra is a form of Agni or

* From the root *śad*, to destroy. The treatises are so called because they communicate the knowledge of Brahm as the sole-existent—which knowledge is held to destroy all ignorance and the evils thence resulting.

† So says Lassen.—Prof. Wilson says that Agni and Indra are the chief gods, and third (but far inferior) the Sun. There is no *system* in the Vedas; the relative importance of the deities is matter of inference. Their attributes are neither clearly nor consistently defined!

Indra, in the Vedas. There is no mention of the Linga; nor of the Trimurti, or union of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. The ten avatāras are not referred to. The system of caste is not recognized, (the hymn [Rig Veda x. 6.] being comparatively modern).

We are not acquainted with any passage in the Vedas which would prove that the early Hindus believed in a Creator and Ruler of the universe. Monotheism, then, is not in the Vedas; they are wholly polytheistic.*

The gods in the Vedas, being deifications of the phenomena and powers of Nature, possess less of a *human* character than those in the Purānas, and are less marked by vices resembling those of men.

The Hymns celebrate the power, exploits, or generosity of the deity addressed. Sometimes his personal beauty is celebrated. In exchange for the praises and offerings presented, he is asked to bestow blessings. Only temporal blessings are sought—such as food, wealth, life, children, cows, horses, protection, the destruction of enemies, &c.†

The offerings of butter, &c. were understood to gratify the gods as coporeal beings. The praises increased their power. In return, therefore, for these, the worshipper waited with full confidence for a favourable answer to his petitions. Still, the idea of *compelling* the gods by prayers or austerities to grant blessings against their will (an idea very common in later Hinduism) seems absent from the Vedas.

The worship consisted of offerings, prayer, and praise. The offerings consisted chiefly of clarified butter poured on the fire and the expressed and fermented juice of the Soma plant offered in ladles. Sometimes it was sprinkled on the sacred fire, sometimes on the sacred grass (kusha) which was strewed on the floor. The remainder was always drunk.

Hymns of prayer and praise accompanied the offering.

Animal victims were offered on particular occasions; "and it is inferrible from some passages that human sacrifices were not unknown."‡

Of a future state very little is said. The immortality of the gods seems recognized, and also the possibility that some human beings may rise to the rank of divinities.§ But

* In a hymn Rig V. x. 11. we find something like Pantheism. But this hymn is of a comparatively modern date.

† Falsehood and sin are mentioned in a very few cases as evils.

‡ Wilson's Rig Veda, p. xxiv.

§ That is to say, three persons are mentioned as having done so, viz. Ribhu, Vibhu, and Vāja. See Rig V. 1.20. These are called Ribhus.

that the hope of heaven or the fear of hell influenced the mind of the primitive Hindus, the Vedas do not shew.

We give the following quotations from the Rig Veda as specimens of its style and character.*

Varuna, the devourer of foes (Hymn 2).

Indra, may these pervading Soma juices enter into thee; may they be propitious for thy attainment of superior intelligence (5).

The belly of Indra, which quaffs the Soma juice abundantly, swells like the ocean, (and is ever) moist like the ample fluids of the palate, (or, like torrents from the mountain-tops) (8).

Indra, the handsome chinned (or handsome-nosed) (9). So 81, 101 &c.

Grant us wealth beyond measure or calculation, inexhaustible (9). Send us liberally cows (10). Enrich us with thousands of excellent cows and horses (29).

May our praises augment thy power (10).

Agni, consume our adversaries (12). Destroy every one that reviles us; slay every one that does us injury (29).

Indra, when fear entered into thy heart when about to slay Ahi, what other destroyer of him didst thou look for, that alarmed thou didst traverse ninety and nine streams like a hawk? (32).

Indra, take not advantage of us like a trafficker (33).

The thrice eleven divinities (34. 35).

Indra, drink like a thirsty stag (16). Impetuous as a bull, he (Indra) quaffed the Soma juice (32). He rushes as a bull to drink the Soma juice (55).

Indra drinks the Soma juice for exhilaration (18).

(We have the mortar and pestle invoked in Hymn 29).

The haughty Indra takes precedence of all gods (55).

They who present to thee oblations, augment thy vast strength, and thy manly vigour (54).

Indra has been augmented in strength and satisfaction by men (81).

The effused and exciting juices have exhilarated thee, O wielder of the thunderbolt (Indra); thus, filled with nutriment, rejoice with thy wife. (82).

May I obtain, O Ushas (dawn), that ample wealth which confers fame, posterity, troops of slaves, and is characterized by horses (92).

Drink, (O Agni) vast of limb, distend thy stomach (104).

The horse of Pedu, the scatterer (of enemies), is always to be invoked (116).

Provided by you with the head of a horse, Dadyanch taught you the mystic science (116). So 117, and 119.

You filled from the hoof of your generous steed, as if from a cask, a hundred jars of wine (116). So 117.

It may perhaps be said that detached paragraphs like the above cannot give a fair representation of the spirit of the Vedas. Let us next, then, take a complete hymn—the first in the Rig Veda.

1. I glorify Agni, the high priest of the sacrifice, the divine, the ministrant, who presents the oblation (to the gods), and is the possessor of great wealth.

2. May that Agni who is to be celebrated by both ancient and modern sages conduct the gods hither.

3. Through Agni the worshipper obtains that affluence which

* The quotations are from the first book of the Rig Veda, as translated by Prof. Wilson.

increases day by day, which is the source of fame and the multiplier of mankind.

4. Agni, the unobstructed sacrifice of which thou art on every side the protector, assuredly reaches the gods.

5. May Agni, the presenter of oblations, the attainer of knowledge, he who is true, renowned, and divine, come hither with the gods.

6. Whatever good thou mayest, Agni, bestow upon the giver (of the oblation), that verily, Angiras, shall revert to thee.

7. We approach thee, Agni, with reverential homage in our thoughts daily, both morning and evening—

8. Thee, the radiant, the protector of sacrifices, the constant illuminator of truth, increasing in thine own dwelling.

9. Agni, be unto us easy of access, as is a father to his son; be ever present with us for our good.

Any elaborate refutation of the religion of the Vedas, after the above remarks and extracts, is unnecessary. To state it, is to refute it. Moreover, it is not now in existence. Hindus speak of the Vedas as the authoritative representation of Hinduism; but none can be more astonished at the religion of the Vedas than the Hindus must be themselves.

In support of the inspiration of the Vedas, the Hindu writings have not supplied any proof that will stand a moment's examination. It is generally taken for granted.* When any proof is offered, the proof itself is equally doubtful with the point to be proved.

Thus the common assertion is that the Vedas were revealed by Brahmá at the creation of the world: but no proof is adduced of the fact asserted. Shankar Achárya asserts that the Vedas possess the quality of omniscience, and therefore must be the work of the Omniscient: but the former assertion he does not attempt to prove.

The Vedānta.

It is not necessary for us to discuss at great length the Hindu philosophy in general. Nor need we point out how much of it is correct and how much erroneous. A certain part of it—particularly of the Nyáya—which is fitted to be useful, does not either support Hinduism or conflict with Christianity. We are concerned only with that which seems likely to affect to a considerable degree the educated mind of India, and which at the same time is opposed to Christianity.

The most popular system of Hindu philosophy in Western India is the Vedānta. In Bengal, also, this system appears to be widely prevalent. It is especially important as being the system on which the educated youth of India, when dissatisfied with popular Hinduism and yet unwilling to embrace Christianity, seem anxious to fall back.

* The *Tarka Sangraha*—an authoritative work on the Nyáya philosophy—divides all speech into *sacred* (वैदिकं) i. e. Vedic, and *popular or profane* (लौकिकं) “The former, being uttered by God, is all authoritative.”

The word *Vedānta* denotes "the end and scope of the Vedas." But the designation is not fair; for Vedānta doctrine is confessedly drawn only from "the Upanishads, and works auxiliary thereto, such as the Shāririk Sūtras (aphorisms)."* We have already seen that the doctrine of the Vedas properly so called, viz. the Sanhitās, is very different from that of the Upanishads.

The great authorities for Vedānta doctrine are the Upanishads, the Shāririk Sūtras (555 in number), and several works of Shankar Achārya's. The Bhagavad-Gītā is a work of great authority and influence, which, in many important points, agrees with Vedānta doctrine. A very useful summary of Vedānta doctrine is contained in the Vedānta Sāra, or "Kernel of the Vedānta," by Sadānanda.†

Great disputes have existed as to the real nature of Vedānta doctrine. A learned writer says: "Such a system, even if it be perfectly comprehensible, cannot be represented by language."‡ The student then can hardly expect to obtain a very clear or consistent conception of the system.

"The Soul and God (Brahm) are one (जीवब्रह्मेक्यं). This is the essence of all Vedānta treatises."§ Frequent references are made to the "great sentence" *Tat tvam viz. That art thou, or Thou art God,—and Aham Brahm, or I am God.*

Brahm, or God, is also frequently called "The one without a second."

"The whole universe is God," || it is said.

God, who is generally called Brahm (i. e. the vast one), consists of existence, knowledge, and joy. ¶

He is the sole reality. All else is unreal; its seeming existence is owing to *Ignorance* (ajñāna). Ignorance is not to be called either an existence or a non-existence. It is not a mere negation, but the opponent of knowledge. It consists of the three qualities, or *fetters* (guna).**

Ignorance has two powers—Envelopment (*avarana*) and Projection (*vikshepa*). The former leads the soul to think itself different from

* Vedānta Sāra. § 3.

† An edition of the Sanskrit text with an English version has been given by Dr. Ballantyne. Our quotations are chiefly from this edition.

‡ Sir Graves Haughton.

§ Vedānta Sāra § 15.

|| *Sarvam khalvidam Brahm* (Ved. Sāra § 78).

¶ Vedānta Sāra § 1. 20 &c. सच्चिदानन्द :

** In the Vedānta the usual sense of *guna* is changed for that of "fetter." (The word *guna* signifies "a cord" as well as "quality." V. S. § 21.

God. The latter suggests (or "projects") the appearance of an external world.

"The projective power can create any thing,—even the whole external universe."*

"From Intellect (chaitanya i. e. God) immersed in Ignorance, arises Ether; from Ether, Air; from Air, Fire; from Fire, Water; from Water, Earth."†

There are four states of the 'Soul'—waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, and one called "the fourth," or pure intelligence. The waking man is in the densest ignorance; the sleeper is freed from a portion of ignorance; he that sleeps without dreaming is freed from still more; but the consummation is the "fourth" state.‡

It seems clearly implied in the Vedānta that the Deity is really unconscious. According to most Hindu systems, when Brahm becomes conscious, he is manifested in the three great gods, and the development of matter commences; but, according to the Vedānta, matter does not exist; except Brahm nothing exists,—its seeming existence being the effect of ignorance or delusion. Thought and joy, according to the Vedānta, are the one, the sole existence.

Still more extraordinary is the assertion of the Gîtā regarding God, "I am existing and non-existing."§ "The highest deity can neither be called existing, nor non-existing."||

The great attainment which the Vedānta presses on us the necessity of making, is *knowledge*. "He who knows what soul is, gets beyond grief." "He who knows God, becomes God."¶ "When he, the first and the last, has been discerned,—then one's own acts are annihilated."**

Meditation without distinction of subject and object (*nirvikalpaka*)†† is the highest form of thought. It is much to say "I am God." But the consummation is when thought exists without any object; it must not make even itself an object.

Unconscious thought—unconscious joy. Such is the "one without a second," "the indivisible." And the perfection of the soul is to recognize itself as such.

* V. S. § 39. † V. S. § 41.

‡ V. S. § 32, 33, 34, 35. The Ved. S. also quotes the text *shivam, shāntam, advaitam, chaturtham* i. e. *blessed, tranquil, without duality the fourth*, as descriptive of the deity.

§ सदसच्चाहम् (Bh. G. ix. 19.)

|| परं ब्रह्म न सत् तन्नासदुच्यते (Bh. G. xiii 12.)

¶ ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति (V. S. §. 18.)

** V. S. §. 143.

†† V. S. § 124.

We said that to state the doctrine of the Veda was equivalent to refuting it. We may say the same thing of the Vedānta doctrine.

We shall not, therefore, offer many remarks regarding it. Suffice it to observe that

1. The three great systems of Hindu Philosophy are mutually contradictory.

2. The Hindu mode of philosophizing is wholly erroneous. It is based on two things—in some cases, pure assumption; in other cases, the Upanishads. The inspiration of the latter is always taken for granted.

3. Physical science is introduced pretty freely into the Hindu philosophy. It is very often entirely erroneous.

4. Hindu philosophy universally assumes the principle that *nothing can be produced out of nothing*. Hence, if the world exists, it must either be eternal, or produced *out of* God.

This principle, on which so much is built, is a pure assumption—unproved, and incapable of being proved.

5. Vedantism contradicts the fundamental principles of human thought: for

A belief in the reality and truthfulness of our consciousness is a principle of “common sense.” And

A belief in the testimony of our bodily senses is equally fundamental.

But the Vedānta denies that either our consciousness or our senses are trustworthy.

6. Moral distinctions are overthrown by the Vedānta.

The sole Reality being Brahm, the pure intellect,—Sin is non-existent and impossible. It *appears* to exist, but the appearance is the effect of ignorance. There is no real difference between right and wrong—good and evil.

What thus follows unavoidably from the principles of the Vedānta philosophy is explicitly avowed in many passages. Thus in the Bh. Gītā it is said: “One ought not to abandon the employment to which he is born, even though it be blameworthy.”* And Krishna denounces the reluctance of Arjuna to slay in battle his nearest relatives, as “disgraceful, despicable weakness.”†

7. Religion is overthrown by the Vedānta.

All true religion is based on a right conception of the relation existing between God and man. Humility, a sense of dependence, love to God, reverence, prayer, obedience, repentance for sin—these and such things appear to a genuine Vedāntist impossible and absurd.

* Bh. Gītā xviii. 49.

सहजं कर्म कौन्तेय सदोषमपि न त्यजेत्.

† Bh. G. ii. 1-3.

Instead of deliverance from the guilt and power of Sin, the Vedāntist seeks deliverance from the idea of Self.

When God is represented as being merely existence, knowledge, and joy, we deny many of the most glorious attributes of the Deity, such as goodness, holiness, love, &c. In fact, the Deity ceases to be a *person*, and is degraded into a *thing*.—If such views of God are not blasphemous, blasphemy is impossible.

8. The Vedānta doctrine is self-contradictory.

It represents God as being existence, knowledge and joy,—yet as not being self-conscious. But thought without consciousness—joy without consciousness—is impossible.

9. But lastly, lest we should be charged with overlooking the practical moral tendency which the Vedāntists claim for their system, let us give it in their own words: That kind of meditation “which recognizes no distinction between subject and object” is the great means of attaining to “the chief end of man,” viz. a knowledge of our oneness with Deity; and the means thereto subservient are 1, forbearance, 2, religious observance, 3, postures, 4, suppression of the breath, 5, restraint of the bodily senses, 6, attention (i. e. fixing the mind on the one reality) 7, contemplation, and 8, meditation (of another kind).*

Under forbearance, is included abstinence from killing, lying, and theft. These sins are thus placed in the same class with breathing naturally, using our eyes and ears, &c. A more absurd tenet it is hardly possible to conceive.

Vedāntism, at best, tends to morality only in the sense that a tree or a stone is more moral than a man.

But enough. We hardly deem it possible that any one—even Vyāsa or Shankarāchārya—really held the full Vedānta doctrine; and assuredly no one in these days can hold it. What is called Vedantism, when stripped of its delusive terminology, will prove to be either Atheism or Deism. Let our modern Vedāntism be honest, and avow its true character. But indeed, in so far as Vedāntism differs from these systems, it is more indefensible and presumptuous than either. Surely, even the fearful assertion “there is no God” is less shocking, than for a frail, guilty, miserable man to say, “I am God.”

It does not seem necessary to examine minutely the other two great systems of Hindu philosophy. We content ourselves with a few sentences on their leading characteristics.

The Sāṅkhya was founded by Kapila, the first Hindu philosopher of eminence. It ascribes all creation (or rather, evolution) to Nature, which is devoid of intelligence. The system of Kapila is Atheistic.

The Nyāya has been mentioned as the least objectionable sys-

* V. S. §. 127.

tem of Hindu philosophy. It seems to admit the personality of the Deity, and to ascribe to Him intelligence, will, and active power. Still the Nyāya is grievously defective. It says nothing whatever of the moral attributes of God, nor of His government. But a Deity without moral attributes and government of the world, is a Deity only in name.

A learned writer who is anxious to speak as kindly of Hindu philosophy as he can consistently with truth, thus expresses himself. "The only one of the six schools which seems to recognize the doctrine of Divine Providence is the Yoga of Patanjali." [Yet the Yoga, we may remark, runs into mysticism, magic, and endless absurdity]. "It thus seems that the consistent followers of these systems can have, in their perfected state, no religion, no action, and no moral character."*

The history of philosophy in India has been somewhat like its history in ancient Greece (See above, p. 98,99). The Hindu philosophers were certainly men of acute and patient thought; but their attempt to solve the problems of the Divine and human natures, human destiny, and human duty has ended in utter failure. Varied systems—each baseless—each absurd,—and all mutually conflicting;—systems cold and cheerless, that frown on human love and virtuous exertion, and speak of annihilation, or something equivalent, as our highest hope. Sorrowful result of infinite speculation! "The world by wisdom knew not God." Unhappy India! will she now accept the lesson of ages, and consent to become a debtor to the grace of Heaven for that light of life which she can, by no effort of her own, produce?

* North British Review, No. XLIX p. 224.

LETTER XII.

PARSI'ISM. EXAMINATION OF ITS EVIDENCE.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

WE come now to consider the evidence in favour of the Pársi Religion. This religion was once extensively diffused,—and for that reason it is important to attend to it. The people that profess it are now few in number; but, as they are chiefly settled in Western India, the system which they follow must be specially interesting to residents in Bombay.

External Evidence.

What is Pársism? That question is not easily answered. It is difficult to discover what books are accounted sacred by the Pársís. In fact there is no agreement, among the Pársís themselves, on this fundamental question. The Pársís possess religious books written in the Zend language; they have others written in the Pahlvi language; and they have others written in the Persian language. Some Pársís believe the religious books written in all these languages, to be inspired. Others hold those written in Zend and Pahlvi to be inspired. Others hold only those written in Zend to be inspired.—This uncertainty must be exceedingly painful to a reflecting Pársi.

Generally speaking, the most enlightened Pársís acknowledge only the Zend writings (which they call the *Zend-avestá*), as inspired. The Pahlvi and Persian writings are more recent, and contain many narratives which

educated Pársís generally consider fabulous and absurd.

I. The first question we have to discuss, relates to the age of the sacred books of the Pársís.

The Persian writings are all modern. One of the most noted of them is the Zarošt-Nameh 1
 Age of the Pársí books. (or, Life of Zoroaster), which was composed about the year 1277.

The Pahlvi writings are also comparatively modern. The most important of these is the Bundeshne, which was probably composed in the 7th century,—that is, about 1200 years ago.

We need not dwell long on these. We come next to the books written in Zend.

There is scarcely any literary question more difficult to settle than that of the age and origin of the Zend writings. Vans Kennedy—a distinguished Orientalist whose name is well known in Bombay—maintained that these books had been written in India, since the arrival of the Pársís in this country. Other very able authors think they must have been written in, or soon after, the days of Ardeshr Bábegán, who restored the Persian monarchy and religion in the third century. The Pársís say that the Vendidad—which is the most important part of the Zend-avesta—is the only one remaining out of twenty-one original sacred books,—the rest having been destroyed by Alexander the Great when he conquered Persia. That books existed in the days of the kings who preceded the invasion of Persia by Alexander, may be probable. But what became of those books for the long space of 500 years, during which the Persian kingdom lay prostrate and the Persian religion despised,—i. e. from Alexander the Great to Ardeshr Bábegán,—it is utterly impossible to say. They may have been all lost. Or, fragments may have been preserved. That the Zend-avesta was compiled about the time of Ardeshr Bábegán, as is supposed by most Orien-

talists, may be true; but compiled from what? from memory? or from fragments of books? or from imagination? or from all these combined? It is impossible to tell. Many learned men think the Zend-avesta contains occasional genuine fragments, older than the days of Alexander, but mixed with heaps of modern rubbish, that is to say, with additions posterior to the third century. Probably, some farther light will soon be thrown on this very perplexing subject. Several learned men are at present busily studying the antiquities of Persia.

II. Let us next inquire into the genuineness of the Zend-avesta.

It is admitted by all Zendscholars that the text of the Zend-avesta has been very greatly corrupted. ^{Is the Zend-avesta genuine? ed.*} The Pahlvi translation, which was probably executed in the third or fourth century, differs very greatly in its readings from our present Zend text. Passages occur in the Zend, which so grievously mar the sense that they must be interpolations.

III. As to the interpretation of the Zend-avesta.

We may fairly declare it quite impossible at present for any Parsi to know well what the Zendavesta contains. The ^{The sense of the Zend-avesta very obscure.} difficulty of translating it is exceedingly great. The Zend language is very little known. We have no Grammar of it, and only a most meagre commencement of a Dictionary. We may hope that light will, ere long, be shed on the dark volume; but, in the mean time, it surely must be distressing to every one who believes it to be the word of God, that he knows so little of its real signification. But how can a man be said to believe the doctrines of a book, the grammatical sense of which he does not understand?

* Journal of the German Oriental Society. (*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*.) Vol. I. p. 249. &c.

IV. On the subject of translations (which are so interesting and important in the case of the Christian Scriptures), little need be said. * I have already spoken of the Pahlvi translation of the Zend-avesta. It is almost as difficult to interpret as the Zend-avesta itself. Besides this, we have only one other translation of the least antiquity;—it is in Sanskrit, but contains only a very small part of the Zend-avesta.*

We have little aid from translations.

V. As to the general credibility of the Pársi books.

Nothing of a satisfactory nature can be advanced on this point.—The Vendidad professes to contain an account of dialogues between the

Is the Zend-avesta credible?

divine Hormazd and Zoroaster. Zoroaster is said to have appeared in the reign of king Gushtasp, and to have persuaded him to embrace the religion of the Zend-avesta.

But who was Gushtasp? when did he live? where did he live? Who was Zoroaster? was there one Zoroaster, —or two,—or three,—or four,—or five,—or six? † Was there any Zoroaster at all? if there was, did he write a book? if he did, is there any evidence that we have any part of it? Such questions as these have been earnestly discussed by learned men; and scarcely one of them can be satisfactorily settled. Learned men, however, are now pretty well agreed that Gushtasp is *not* the same as Darius Hystaspes; that we cannot determine when Gushtasp lived; but that it probably was before the time asserted by the Pársis. The name *Zarathustra*, which is the Zend form of Zoroaster, probably means *golden star*.‡ Some think that the supposed prophet of the Persians never existed at all, but is a purely fabulous personage.

* That of Nariosangh on the Yagna.—Of recent versions we need not speak at present.

† Stanly, in his "History of Philosophy," reckons up six.

‡ Burnouf, *Commentaire sur le Yagna* p. clxvi. (*Additions et Corrections*.) So too, Lassen and Windischmann.

The writings of the Greeks, Romans, Hindus, and Musalmáns, do not assist us in this difficulty. ^{No external evidence in its support.} The Hindus are entirely silent on the subject. The Musulmán authorities are all very modern; the oldest is the poet Firdusí who wrote in the end of the tenth century,—that is, 1500 years after the time when the Pársís suppose Zoroaster to have appeared. The Pársís themselves have borrowed most of their history from this highly imaginative poet, but very bad historian. The Zartosht Nameh, (or Life of Zoroaster) is, as we have seen, only six hundred years old, so that it is no authority whatever for events which occurred at least 2300 years ago.

There is then no evidence, except the Zend-avesta itself, to prove that Zoroaster conversed with Hormazd, or even visited Gushtasp. We may hold the latter fact quite possible; but surely we require some evidence to make us credit the former. We are not at liberty to believe every man who says he is commissioned by God to instruct us. He must produce credentials,—he must give us proofs.

VI. But the Pársís say that Zoroaster performed miracles. If they could only prove that this ^{Did Zoroaster perform miracles?} was really the case, they would establish his authority as a prophet. What arguments, then, can they adduce to prove the reality of the miracles they ascribe to him?

1. There does not seem to be any passage in the Vendidad that declares Zoroaster to have been a worker of miracles. If there were any passages that did so, these would not, of course, prove the fact; a single witness, testifying of his own character, is not enough to convince us. But the absence of such passages does prove that he did not perform miracles.

2. Neither does there seem to be any passage in any part of the Zend-avesta that asserts Zoroaster to have performed miracles.

3. The *Shah-Nameh* of Firdusí is very frequently quoted by the Pársís in support of the claims of their prophet. Its evidence, however, is against them. It speaks of Zoroaster as an impostor,*—though the Pársís scarcely seem aware of the fact. We cannot, however, attach the slightest weight to Firdusí's statements for, or against, Zoroaster, for two reasons. First; his work is entirely a romance, and not a history. Facts that are well known, such as Alexander's birth, wars, &c. he completely misrepresents, so as to render himself entirely unworthy of credit. His work is filled with the most extraordinary and incredible tales, about white Demons, Simurghs, enchanters, and so forth. Let any one read the account of Rustam's labours, or those of Isfandiyar, and he will confess that they are wilder than any thing contained even in the "Thousand and one nights." Secondly; Firdusí (as was already mentioned) wrote at least 1500 years after the latest date that can be fixed for Zoroaster's appearance.

4. Other authors to whom the Pársís refer, are still later. The *Zartosht-Nameh* mentions no authorities from which it drew its statements regarding Zoroaster. Some of the writers on whose testimony the Pársís build, mention that he consulted with the devil†;—but we reject their evidence, whether for, or against, Zoroaster, on the ground of their writing so long after him. What they could learn from oral tradition, was merely fable; what they could invent, was nothing better.

On the whole, then, the arguments to prove that Zoroaster wrought miracles, are wholly unsatisfactory.

* See Atkinson's Summary of the *Sháh-Námeh* p. 385 &c.—Also Mr. Eastwick's translation of Firdusí's account of Zoroaster. Both this, and Mr. Eastwick's translation of the *Zartosht-Námeh*, will be found in the Rev. Dr. Wilson's work on the Pársí Religion.

† So the *Rauzat-as-Safá* of Mirkhond. See the translation by Shea, p. 283, &c.

5. Perhaps we may infer something as to the truth or falsehood of the miracles ascribed to Zoroaster by the Pársis, from the consideration of the miracles themselves. They are such as the following. We condense the account from the Zartosht-Námeh.

Immediately when he was born, he laughed aloud. A wicked king attempted to stab him; but his hand was dried up. Zartosht was thrown into the fire; but the fire became like water, and he fell asleep. He was placed in a narrow road to be trampled to death by oxen, but one of the oxen stood over him and protected him. He was next placed to be trampled to death by wild horses, but one of them protected him. He was exposed to wolves, but they would not devour him. Cows came to the place, and put their teats filled with milk into his mouth. Having to cross the sea with his companions, he entered the water, and for a whole month he and his companions were borne through the water without any ship. Zartosht was conveyed to heaven, saw God, and conversed with him. Thence he saw Ahriman in hell. When Ahriman beheld him, he raised a cry from the pit of hell and said to Zartosht, "Separate thyself from the pure faith." Zartosht was made to pass through flaming fire; he did so, uninjured. Molten brass was poured on him. His belly was opened, and the entrails dragged forth, while streams of blood gushed out. All this was done in Heaven. When he came back from the Divine presence, he was visited by various Angels in succession. First, one angel came and commanded him to take great care of sheep and calves. Another came and commanded him to take great care of fire and fire-temples. Another came and commanded him to keep clean the edge of arms, swords, spears, &c. "that when his enemy is before him, he may tear his flesh therewith, causing pain." Next, a female angel came and directed that the earth should be cultivated, and kept clean from blood, and filth, and carrion.—King Gushtásp had a wonderful black horse, which in speed equalled the wind, and which always ensured its rider the victory. One day, its four feet were found drawn up into its belly. Gushtásp said to Zartosht: "If you are a prophet, restore my steed to health." Zartosht prayed and wept before God. Then one leg came out. He prayed again; and another leg came out. Finally, all the legs came out.

I think it quite sufficient to quote these miracles, without giving any refutation of them. They are childish and irrational. Yet the conclusion of the book which contains them, is as follows; "Whosoever reads, let him applaud!"

VII. But we must next inquire, whether the mission of Zoroaster was supported by any prophecies.

Are there prophecies in the Zend-avesta?

1. In the Vendidad there do not seem to be any prophecies. In the nineteenth fargard (chapter) according to Anquetil's French version, there appears a prediction regarding three sons of Zoroaster, who are still to be born. But the version of Anquetil cannot here be trusted, and we shall not lay this foolish passage to the account of the Vendidad. It is found, however, in the Gujarati paraphrase of the passage by Framji Aspandiarji nearly in accordance with Anquetil,—and many Parsis fully believe it.

This prophecy, as it occurs in the later books of the Parsis, is so obscene and absurd that I cannot quote it.

2. There is a book professing to contain prophecy, called Jamasp Namah. It is full of erroneous astronomy, astrology, and mistakes in history. No educated Parsi will acknowledge it as an authority, although it is popular among the ignorant. We therefore pass it over.

3. There are some strange wild statements in the end of the Zartosht-Namah, that seem intended to describe the condition of Persia when it was conquered by the Muhammadans, but which profess to have been uttered long before by God to Zoroaster. But as the Zartosht-Namah was written long after the events referred to, it was easy to describe things that had already occurred.

On the whole, it may safely be asserted that probably never any people had less evidence than the Parsis, either from miracles or prophecy, in support of the claims of their supposed Prophet.

VIII. Before concluding the examination of the External Evidences of Parsiism, I may mention that learned men in Europe have recently discovered many important points of resem-

Argument from the Vedas against Parsiism.

blance between the Zend-avesta of the Pársís and the Veda of the Hindus. Many of the persons introduced into these books are the same. Thus, *Vivanghvat* in the Zend-avesta is *Vivasvat* in the Veda; his son *Jamshid* (in Zend, *Yimo khshaeta* i. e. *Yimo the Ruler*) is in the Veda, *Yama*. *Feridun* (in Zend, *Thraetona*) is identified with *Trita* or *Traitana*.

Learned men in Europe are agreed that we know nothing of Persian history before the time of Cyrus (about 540 B. C.), and that all that is related of the kings before him is utterly uncertain. What is recorded even of the Kaianian kings, is quite irreconcilable with what the Greeks relate.* The history of the Peshdadian kings, who preceded them, is mere wild mythology,—Feridun and Zohak and other supposed warriors, had no more a real existence than the deities of the Hindus. In fact, the supposed early kings of Persia are often the same as the deities of the Vedas.†

Very probably, this view is correct. At all events, I trust our Pársí friends will recollect that it is the opinion of the most learned Oriental scholars, who have no desire to attack Pársiism, but who are brought to such conclusions simply by the rules of literary criticism.

If it be correct, however, it overturns from the very foundation the opinions on historical subjects which are embodied both in the Zend-avesta and the later works of the Pársís.

* Sir H. Rawlinson and other learned men have carefully examined the ancient inscriptions found in various parts of Persia. Their discoveries generally agree with the Greek writers, but very rarely with the Pársí statements.

† See a very interesting paper by Dr. Roth, entitled; "The Legend of Feridun in India and Iran," in the *Zeitschrift der Deutschen M. G.* II. p. 216. An analysis of it is given in the *Journal of the Bombay B. R. Asiat. Soc.* for July 1852.

We must now proceed to consider the Internal Evidence of Pársism.

Internal Evidence.

Looking at the Pársi religion as a whole, we may safely assert that it is decidedly more in accordance with reason and morality than Hinduism. Pársism seems to be a reformation of an older system of religion which was common at one time to both the Hindu and Persian branches of what is called the Aryan family.* The worship of images—the avowed polytheism—the confounding of good and evil—the immoral character ascribed to the objects of worship,—these are grievous faults in Hinduism, which cannot be charged upon Pársism. Pársism is also superior to Hinduism in the fact that it encourages to active exertion against what is believed to be evil,—the Pársi must labour to destroy the productions of Ahriman, the evil principle. Farther, Pársism has gradually adopted certain important truths which were originally confined to the Old and New Testaments. For example, the doctrine of the *resurrection* is not in the older Pársi books †; and must have been obtained either directly from the Bible,—or indirectly from it, through the Muhammadans. History tells us that the Pársis had very close connexion, first with the Jews, secondly with the Christians, and thirdly with the Muhammadans; and that their religion has been influenced by the doctrines of the Bible, no man can doubt. In these points, then, Pársism is decidedly better than Hinduism.‡ Still, the argument from internal evidence is very strong against the notion that Pársism is a Revelation from God.

I. The exceeding discordance that exists among the

* Lassen's *Indische Alterthumskunde*, Vol. I. p. 516.

† The Pársis may not be willing to admit this; but it has been proved by M. Burnouf.

‡ Constructively, the Pársis are polytheists. See below.

The Pársi
scriptures are
contradictory.

Pársi sacred books, is a decisive argument against their inspiration.

The Zend books—the Pahlvi books—the Persian books—these constitute three different kinds of Scriptures, and they contain three different systems of doctrine. It can be easily demonstrated that even such authoritative works as the *Bundeshne* and *Ardai-Viraf-Nameh*, contain doctrines widely different from those of the Zend writings. This is admitted by all Orientalists,—and any one may see it who will compare the works in question.

Till recently, all the Pársis acknowledge the first two classes and many of the third, as authoritative. The late chief priest, *Edalji Dárabji Sanjána*, who was supposed to be a very learned man, did so. The majority of the Pársis still admit all these classes of books.—A few profess to acknowledge the Zend only. Yet, they too retain very many ideas that are not in the Zend books. The doctrines of the *Zend-avesta* are but few; and if Pársiism were to be strictly conformed to it, the present belief and rites of the Pársis would require to be very greatly altered.

II. The views of God inculcated in all the Pársi sacred books are very imperfect.

Their views
of God are ve-
ry imperfect.

Here we come to a very important question, viz. Who is the supreme God acknowledged by the Pársis? The opinion of many learned men of Europe is that the Zend books ascribe the origin of all things to a Divine Being called *Zarúána-Akarana*, or *Time without bounds*, (as the words have generally been rendered); whereas, the Pársis of the present day generally represent this Being as merely *eternity* or *fate*, and hold *Hormazd* (in Zend *Ahura Mazdá*) to be really God. But, in either case, the Pársi views of God are imperfect and erroneous. If *Zarúán* is an intelligent being, and *Hormazd* derived from him, then *Hormazd* must be said to have usurped the place of *Zarúán*. For divine names and worship are ascribed to *Hormazd* in

all their books ; whereas, Zaruán is very seldom mentioned.

Again, if Hormazd be eternal and supreme, he is still degraded from his proper dignity as God, by having only the same terms of praise and worship ascribed to him, as are applied to the light, the water, earth, heaven, and even animals. He is also put too much on an equality of power with Ahriman,—with whom he contends, sometimes successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully.

Thus, whoever may be the supreme God of the Pársís, their views of the Deity are exceedingly defective.

It is very interesting to compare the Pársí view of God with the Hindu one. In the later Shastras of the Hindus, God is rendered accessible to men ; but this is accomplished by ascribing to him human feelings which are in many cases sinful. Take the characters of Shiva, Ráma, and Krishna, for examples. In the Pársí books, Hormazd has no human vices,—and this is well ; but then, he appears far-off, and ill understood,—a being whom it is difficult to know and impossible to love. Still, undoubtedly, in this important point, Pársíism is superior to Hinduism. The Pársí view of God is very imperfect ; but the Hindu view is often entirely wrong.

III. It is impossible to deny that the Pársís are polytheists. Or, one might call them, in a certain sense, pantheists. Herodotus remarked, more than 2,000 years ago, that the Persians worshipped “the whole circle of the heavens.” The remark is still true. They worship the sun, moon, stars, fire, the waters, the earth, trees, mountains,—nay, their own souls; departed souls, and so on.

It may be said that the worship paid to these objects is different from the worship paid to Hormazd. But the words of praise and adoration are generally the same, whether applied to high or low objects.

Again, the Pársís hold that, in worshipping God’s work

they worship God. This is an error of the most dangerous kind.

IV. The doctrine of *Sin* is exceedingly defective in the Pársi religion. In all the books the references to moral evil are exceedingly few, while the references to ceremonial defilement are numberless. The books speak of the proper treatment of the ground, the disposal of the dead, the feeding of dogs and so on ; but moral lessons they have almost none.

Pársi doctrine of Sin is erroneous.

Very great evil results from this exclusive insisting on ceremonial purity and impurity. The real nature of sin is forgotten ; the corruption of human nature is overlooked ; and men are made to waste their time in the performance of endless trifling rites. When a fearful disease is raging in the very vitals of our frame, he would not be a wise physician who would direct all his attention to a few spots that appeared on the outside of the body.

V. The childish character of many of the institutions of the Pársi religion is so remarkable, that all writers have been astonished at it. It specifies, with laborious minuteness, the mode in which the hairs and nails of the body must be cut off and buried, and contains many other things equally trivial. On account of such things Sir W. Jones maintained that the author of the Zend-avesta could not have been possessed of common sense. So also Vans Kennedy, Richardson, and many others have spoken.

Pársi institutions are often childish.

VI. There are very many errors in science contained in the Pársi books. I do not speak of the follies of the Persian works, such as the Jamasp Nameh, which is full of false astronomy ; nor of the Pahlvi books, which are also full of errors,—but I speak even of the Zend-avesta. It contains such assertions as the following.

The Pársi scriptures are opposed to Science.

Winter was produced by devils. Flies and ants were produced by

Ahriman, the evil principle. Certain conditions, essential to the female sex, were also produced by him. The moon shines by her own light. The planets and fixed stars have an influence on diseases. The sun has four horses. The star Tashter (Sirius) has the body of a bull and horns of gold. The same star raises the waters from the Zare sea that are formed into rain.

The stories told of this star (Sirius) are exceedingly wild—quite as extravagant as any thing in the Hindu Purānas.

A great many equally extraordinary things are said of water and fire, which are entirely opposed to the discoveries of modern science.

VII. The Pārsī books are, in many points, irreconcilable with history.

And to History. On this subject we may content ourselves with a sentence or two from Sir H. Rawlinson, who has distinguished himself by his decyphering and translation of the Persian Cuneiform inscriptions.

“The compilation of the works of Zoroaster must have taken place, apparently, at a period when not only the cuneiform inscriptions were illegible, but when their contents even had failed from public memory,—else, the priesthood could neither have had the audacity nor the desire to darken authentic history by the distorted and incomplete allusions to Jemshid and the Kayanian monarchs, which are found in the Vendidad Sade and the ancient hymns.” “Disfigurement of historical names and straining after artificial etymologies occur in every page of the Zend-avesta.*

VIII. On the whole, the tendency of the Zend-avesta may have been favourable to agriculture and the outward comfort of men existing in a rude state of society,—although even then, the rules with regard to women and the dying must have pressed hard on the most defenceless of the human race,

* Persian Cuneiform Inscriptions. Journal, Royal Asiatic Society vol. x. p. 51.

Beyond this, we can say little in its favour. The Pársi system does not appear well fitted to cultivate man's intellectual powers; nor, on the whole, is it deserving of commendation as a moral system. As a system of Religion (in the high sense of the word) Pársism is very faulty. Its idea of Sin is always defective, and often erroneous. It shows no sense of the necessity of any great Atonement. Nor is the importance of the purification of the human heart at all well understood.

Thus, the claims of Pársism to be considered a Divine Revelation are entirely unsatisfactory. We may venture to affirm that the Pársis themselves will soon see this. That a depressed and ignorant people, like the remnant of Zoroastrians still existing in Persia, should believe and practise such a system, is not perhaps surprising; but it certainly would astonish us if an active and intelligent race, like the Pársis of Western India, should long adhere to it. Even already, although they practise its rites, many disbelieve its doctrines. Let us hope and pray that the Pársis may not pass from superstition to infidelity, but may exchange a false religion for the one true religion, and turn from the imagined glory of their so-called "golden star," to walk in the cheering beams of the "Sun of Righteousness."—I am, &c.

NOTE.

The controversy which has long existed with regard to the genuineness of the Zend-avesta is not yet settled. As these sheets are passing through the press, (Dec. 1856) Mr. Romer—a gentleman who has devoted much attention to the question—still publishes papers which affirm that the Zend books are modern forgeries.

Most writers, however, think that the Zend-avesta can be traced up satisfactorily to the third or fourth century after Christ.

The text of the Zend-avesta is in a state of much uncertainty. Thus Westergaard says that "the Manuscripts of the Yashts present a mass of corrupt readings." Interpolations, mutilations, and unintelligible passages abound in all the Zend books; and even the most

cautious scholars are compelled to have recourse to what is called "conjectural emendation"—which ought to be tried only when all the MSS. are demonstrably and irrecoverably wrong. We may fairly call the Zend text fragmentary and chaotic.

The Pársis hold that their sacred books were destroyed by Alexander the Great, and restored about five hundred years afterwards under Ardashir Babegan, by Ardáf Viráf. They assert that Ardáf Viráf was guided by inspiration in the work of restoration. But of that inspiration no proof whatever is supplied.

Generally they hold that that part of the Zend-avesta which is called the Vendidad survived the destruction of their books under Alexander. But if so, what proof can be given that it was not very greatly altered and corrupted during the five hundred years that followed?

The Zend-avesta consists of the Vendidad, the Yazna, the Vispard, and the Khurdah Avesta.

The first three occur in different MSS. with comparatively little variation. The contents of the Khurdah Avesta differ greatly in different MSS.

Much uncertainty is still connected with the history of the Zend-avesta. It is a collection of writings exceedingly diversified in age, form, and character. The Zend language appears in the Zend-avesta in at least two different dialects.

At present we wait with interest for the completion of the labours of two learned men who have devoted much attention to the Zend-avesta—Westergaard and Spiegel. Each of them will present us with a complete text of the Zend, and a translation.

A society has sprung up among the Pársis which has for its avowed end the restoration of Zoroastrianism to its original purity. The society consists chiefly of young men who have received a considerable amount of education, and who are disgusted with the many absurdities that exist in modern Zoroastrianism.

But these young men are greatly mistaken if they think that original Zoroastrianism will stand examination. So long as the Zend-avesta is silent, it may be an object of reverence; but the charm is broken the moment that the supposed oracle begins to speak.

LETTER XIII.

MUHAMMADANISM. EXAMINATION OF ITS EVIDENCES.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

WE come now to consider the evidences that can be adduced in support of the Muhammadan religion. This is a very important subject of inquiry. The Muhammadan religion is interesting, whether we consider its remarkable origin, its rapid dissemination, or its wide extent. Parsiism is now professed by a very small number of people; even Hinduism is confined to a portion of the inhabitants of one country; but Muhammadanism has numerous followers in Asia and Africa, and some even in Europe.

What, then, is Muhammadanism? In examining that question, we must draw a clear line of distinction between the system promulgated by Muhammad himself, and the system which has been embraced by Muhammadans in more recent times. The reason for this will very fully appear afterwards; in the meantime, allow me to mention that I insist on this separation being made between the two systems, that we may do full justice to Muhammad. The system generally embraced by his followers is far more absurd than the one he originally propounded; and in fairness we must not impute to him the follies of later sectaries and commentators.

External Evidence.

I. Our inquiry, then, must first be respecting the history of Muhammad, and the Kuran.

We find ourselves involved in difficulties at the very outset. A learned Arabic scholar, writing in 1843, remarks that "until we possess a more complete history of Muhammad than has yet been published in Europe, we may in many cases, be greatly misled in judging of the motives of his actions, and of the objects which he had in view."^{*}

The remark will still hold good to a considerable extent although we now possess such excellent works as those of Weil, Caussin de Percival, and Sprenger.

Perhaps the most judicious oriental writer of Muhammad's life is Abulfeda; but he flourished in the 14th century, that is, seven hundred years after Muhammad,—and the writers quoted by him do not belong to the first century after Muhammad.

We cannot, then, call Abulfeda *an authority* regarding the facts of Muhammad's life and character. Still less can we attribute any independent weight to such writers as Mirkhond (15th century) and Al Jannabi (16th century). Tábari, who died A. H. 310 (A. D. 922), is often quoted by Musulman writers; but he is removed more than two hundred years from the events which he relates; and moreover his work is available only in a Persian translation which is scarcely trustworthy. We must ascend higher. We find that the earliest extant writers on Muhammad are Ibn Hisham, who died A. H. 213,—and Wákidi, who was born A. H. 130, and died A. H. 207.†

* Lane. "Selections from the Kuran," p. 52.

† Ibn Hisham gave an edition—how much altered we do not know—of an earlier work by Ibn Ishak, who died A. H. 151. Ibn Ishak is said to have invented new statements about Muhammad: and he has been called by Musalmans "a great liar." Still lower is the authority of Ibn Hisham.

Wákidi is the great storehouse from which information must be drawn.

We possess, then, no account of Muhammad from the pen of any of his contemporaries. Whatever they may have written respecting him has perished; and nothing has survived of what was composed within *one hundred years* of his death. This is a fact of much significance. It leaves a painful degree of uncertainty respecting the real career and character of Muhammad.

In these circumstances, one naturally turns to the Kurán in order to draw from it the facts of Muhammad's life. Even this however, is not very satisfactory. It is not possible to prove that the Kuran is the same as Muhammad left it. As the different portions of it were delivered to his followers during the space of twenty-three years, they were either committed to memory by them, or written on palm-leaves, skins, and (as is said) shoulder-blades of mutton.* The original copies were then promiscuously thrown into a chest; and in this disorder they were left when Muhammad died. Two years later, Abu Bakr ordered the whole to be collected, both from what was written, and what had been committed to memory. Hence it is generally supposed that Abu Bakr was the real compiler of the Kurán.† It is impossible to say to what extent he may have interfered with it. About seventeen years afterwards, Othman, observing that great disagreement existed between the copies of the Kurán used in different places, ordered a large number of copies to be transcribed neatly from the copy of Abu Bakr.‡ These amended copies were then dispersed far and wide, and the old ones were destroyed.

Thus the Kurán has passed through the hands both

* Gibbon, chap. l. p. 264 (Milman's Edit.)

† Sale's Koran. Preliminary Discourse, p. 86.

‡ Many things however, that stood in the original copy in Hafsa's possession, were altered. See Sale, Preliminary Discourse, p. 87.

of Abu Bakr and Othman, and been revised by them since it was communicated by Muhammad. Unless, then, we can prove that neither of these men either could, or would deceive, we cannot be certain that the Kurán has not been considerably corrupted.

The Shiah Musalmans maintain that ten sections (one fourth part of the whole) were struck out of the Kurán by Othman.* If he was capable of striking out ten sections, he was capable of taking other unwarrantable liberties.

Again, since Abu Bakr's copy was committed to the care of Hafsa, one of Muhammad's wives, we should require farther to prove that she was entirely faithful to her trust.

These are really very serious difficulties in regard to *the genuineness of the Kurán*. To prove it uncorrupted, is utterly impossible.

Two important consequences of this doubt may be mentioned. First, we are perplexed in judging of Muhammad's life and character, which (as we formerly saw) cannot be satisfactorily ascertained from the Musalmán historians, and which we now see cannot be deduced with satisfactory evidence from the Kurán itself;—so that Muhammad may have been better, or he may have been worse, than is generally supposed. Secondly, even if Muhammad did communicate a Revelation from God, it cannot be shewn that no liberties have been taken with it. Important things may have been added,—important things may have been subtracted.

II. Let us, however, suppose that the Kurán is on the whole the same now, as it was when delivered by Muhammad. What evidence have we that its author was what he claimed to be—"the Apostle of God?"

* The Dabistán contains one of the ten sections which are thus said to have been unwarrantably struck out of the Kurán. See the translation of the Dabistán by Shea and Troyer, vol. ii. p. 363.

We have seen that by far the best authority regarding the facts of Muhammad's life and character is the Kurán itself. Now, the subject of miracles is often introduced into the Kurán; but there does not appear to be any passage which declares that Muhammad wrought miracles. There are many passages in which he states reasons for not working them; and there are some in which he expressly says that he was not sent to be a worker of miracles. Thus in Sura 13th, God is represented as thus addressing Muhammad; "The infidels say, 'Unless a sign be sent down unto him from his Lord, we will not believe.' Thou art commissioned to be a preacher only, and not a worker of miracles."* So in Sura 17th, God is again represented as saying: "Nothing hindered us from sending thee with miracles, except that the former nations have charged them with imposture."†. But it is unnecessary to dwell at greater length on this point: every candid reader of the Kurán will admit the truth of the assertion now made.

It is true that many Muhammadan writers mention miracles as having been performed by their prophet. But this opinion is so entirely opposite to what Muhammad himself has asserted, that it is deserving of no attention.

1. But perhaps some notice ought to be taken of certain miracles which some commentators assert to be mentioned in the Kurán itself. The most celebrated of these is *the Splitting of the Moon*. Let us see what is written in the Kurán on this matter. The 24th Sura commences thus: "The hour of judgment approaches (or, more literally, has come near); and the

* So Sale. More literally rendered, the passage reads thus: *The infidels say, 'Has no sign descended on him from his Lord?' Truly thou art a preacher.* See Marracci's *Koran* p. 368.

† So Marracci and Sale. Maulaví Abdul Qádir renders it: *Aur ham-ne isi se mauqif kin nishanian bhejni, ki aglon ne unko jhuthlaya.* Substantially, the sense is the same.

Moon has been split in sunder; but, if they see (shall see) a sign, they turn aside (shall turn aside) saying, 'this is a powerful charm.'

a. The Muhammadan writers themselves are not agreed as to the meaning of this passage. Some understood that Muhammad here poetically speaks of the future in the past tense.* This is often done in Hebrew and in Arabic. In that case Muhammad merely mentions the splitting of the Moon as a sign which shall precede the day of judgment. The words that follow in the Kurán seem to favour this interpretation. Muhammad does not say that *although unbelievers have seen a sign, they turn aside*, but—*if they shall see*. Surely if Muhammad had meant that the miracle had actually been performed, he would have often referred to it as a great aggravation of the guilt of unbelief.

b. Again, Muhammad does not say that the Moon is split *by him*. Even if this wonderful thing did take place, it would only prove the power of God; it would not establish in the least degree the claims of Muhammad.

c. Farther, it is evident that the splitting of the Moon is here put as a sign of the day of judgment. But if the splitting of the Moon took place in Muhammad's days—that is to say, twelve hundred years ago—how could it be a sign of the day of judgment—which has not yet come?

2. Another very famous event is *the Night-journey of Muhammad*. The Kurán thus speaks of "The Night-journey." it: "Praise be unto Him who transported his servant by night from the sacred temple [of Mecca] to the farther temple [of Jerusalem.]" (Sura 17th.) The Muhammadan writers tell us that he was carried through the seven heavens into the immediate presence of God, and then brought back to Mecca the same night. But not

* Marracci's Koran p. 689. Prodromus ii, p. 17.—Gibbon Chap. i. Note 99.

a syllable of all this is written in the Kurán; and we must not impute to Muhammad the absurd imaginations of his followers. Taking Muhammad's own statement, there appears nothing miraculous in it. We often say that we did so and so in our sleep, or that we were carried somewhere in our dreams,—and the words of Muhammad will very naturally bear a similar interpretation. Such has been the opinion of many Muhammadans; and in particular it is said that Hafsa, the wife of Muhammad, declared that on the night in question he never quitted his bed. Hafsa's testimony is worth a good deal on such a point. It is possible that Muhammad fell into a state of mental excitement in which he scarcely knew whether his transportation was a vision or a reality. Or, that without intending to deceive, he may have imagined it to be the latter. Similar mistakes have occurred in other cases.

Again, we have no testimony but that of Muhammad himself in proof of the reality of this Night-journey. How can we trust a single witness on such a point, and especially when he bears testimony in favour of himself?

3. Another wonderful circumstance related in the Kurán which the Musalmáns mention as a miracle, is this, that “a company of genii (jinns) having heard Muhammad reading the Kurán, believed, and went and preached to their companions.” (See Suras 46th and 72nd.)*

The *jinns* or *genii* are creatures supposed to be intermediate between angels and men. They are said by a learned Muhammadan writer† to be the offspring of the

* Sura 46. “Remember when we caused certain of the genii to turn aside unto thee, that they might hear the Koran; and when they were present at the reading of the same, they said one to another, Give ear. And when it was ended they returned back to their people, preaching what they had heard.” Sale's Koran, Vol. ii. p. 262.

† Jelál-ad-din. See Marracci's Koran, Prodomus ii. p. 15.

devil, and to differ from angels in having children of their own.

On this miracle we need make no other remark than this,—instead of proving anything, it requires proof itself. Are there such beings as *jins*? Again, how can Muhammad's testimony be received on the point? It is possible that Muhammad may have dreamt such a thing; but we have nothing to do with his dreams.*

But we need not dwell longer on this matter; it proves nothing of the truth of Muhammad's claims. Christians never quote the statement that Christ was "seen of angels" as a miracle that demonstrates the truth of his mission. Miracles that do this, must be open, public, and undeniable.

4. Another thing mentioned in the Kurán which the Musalmáns regard as a wonderful miracle, is the victory which Muhammad gained at Badr. It is said that Muhammad had only three hundred and nineteen men, and the enemy nearly a thousand. The Koran informs us (Suras 3rd. and 7th.) that God first sent a thousand angels, and then three thousand, to assist the Musalmáns.† In this battle seventy of the enemy were slain, and only fourteen Musalmáns.

This story seems to refute itself. Surely 4,000 angels and 319 Musalmáns were not required to defeat about 1000 of the enemy! None of the Musalmáns is said to have seen the angels.

Again, even if 319 Musalmans, without the aid of angels, defeated 1000 of the enemy, it was no very astonishing

* One cannot help thinking that Muhammad had in his eye a circumstance that is mentioned of Christ, viz. that he was "seen of angels." But what a difference between the two statements! The Bible informs us that angels attentively noted the great work which the Redeemer of the world performed; the Kurán tells us that not angels but *jins*—the offspring of the devil—became Musalmáns, that their sins might be forgiven.

† Sale's Koran, Vol. I. p. 207 and 54.

ing achievement. A few years ago, Sir Charles Napier fought and won in Sindh against far greater odds; and many more wonderful victories are on record.

These are all the events related in the Kurán, in connection with Muhammad, that present the slightest appearance of miracles. It is very plain that these supposed miracles prove nothing regarding the apostleship of Muhammad.

III. But miracles are properly of two kinds, viz. miracles of power, and miracles of wisdom. Muhammad uttered no prophecies. Christians believe that the divine origin of their Scriptures is proved by the fulfilment of many *prophecies*, that is, predictions of future events which it was beyond the power of human wisdom to anticipate. Let us see whether Muhammad possessed the gift of predicting future events of this kind.

1. There does not appear to be any passage in the Kurán in which Muhammad himself distinctly claims the possession of such a gift.

Various passages, however, are referred to by his followers as being prophetic. The most important of these are the following.

2. In the 30th Sura of the Kurán we read thus: "The Greeks have been overcome*" in the nearest part of the land; but after their defeat they shall overcome within a few years."

This passage is often triumphantly quoted by Muhammadans, as a proof that Muhammad was an inspired Prophet. But they themselves admit that some copies read the passage thus: "The Greeks have overcome, but—shall be overcome." The difference of signification depends on a difference in the Arabic vowel points. So that this

* Sale inserts the words "by the Persians;" but these are not in the original.

† Zamakshari, quoted in Marracci's Koran. Prodr. ii. p. 23.

passage would have been equally true, whether the Greeks had conquered or been conquered.—But waving this objection, we find that the Muhammadans themselves do not at all agree as to the enemy who conquered the Greeks, or the place where, or the time when, the battle took place. Some say the Persians were the enemy—others, the Arabs:* some mention Mesopotamia as the field of battle—others, some part of Arabia,—others, Palestine. Even supposing that all these difficulties could be removed, still the supposed prediction has nothing wonderful in it. Muhammad speaks of something that is to happen within a few years,—for the language he employs will signify any period from three to ten years. Here, then, there seems nothing more than prudence and foresight. When some years ago the British troops were almost destroyed in Cábúl, any man who had heard of the vast resources of Britain might have ventured to foretell that the British would be able to return and signally chastise the enemy. Muhammad wished to encourage his followers; he had far more sympathy with the Christian Greeks than with the Zoroastrian Persians,† and he wished that the former might be victorious. Moreover, nothing was more probable than that a great civilized empire, like the Greek, professing one religion, would prevail against a kingdom like Persia, which was semi-barbarous, divided against itself,‡ idolatrous, and persecuting.

3. There are several other passages of a somewhat similar kind. The most important of these are the following.§ (Sura 24th.) “God promiseth unto such of you

* Zamakshari. See Marracci as above.

† Or Pagan Arabs,—if they were the enemy.

‡ Very many Christians were in Persia. Numbers were cruelly put to death.

§ See the Muhammadan Professor's tract in Lee's edition of Martyn's Controversial Tracts, p. 43.

as believe and do good works, that he will cause them to succeed [the unbelievers] in the earth."—(Sura 48th) "Ye shall surely enter the holy temple [of Mecca,] if God please, in full security."—(Sura 27th) "Verily he who hath given thee the Kurán for a rule of faith and practice, will certainly bring thee back [home into Mecca.]"

These, then, are among the most boasted prophecies in the Kurán. But every general, in haranguing his army, employs the language of encouragement and hope; and many predictions of success have been made in far more trying circumstances than those of Muhammad, which have yet been accomplished. We find remarkable *guesses** in Greek and Latin poets, which have been fulfilled—but which no man regards as having been uttered under Divine inspiration.

Prophecy in the Christian Scriptures is an essential part of the system. Not so in the Kurán. In the latter it is never referred to as *evidence*. Certainly Muhammad did not claim the power of foretelling future events.

Again, if there are predictions in the Kurán, some of them are *false*. In Sura 48th we read, "It is He who has sent his Apostle with the direction and the religion of truth, that he may exalt the same above every religion." Muhammadanism is not exalted above Christianity in its extent, the learning of its professors, or the purity of morals which it produces. Christianity is still spreading much faster than Muhammadanism, and is far more vitally, and far more beneficially, affecting the progress of the human race.

IV. The rapid dissemination of Muhammadanism in the first period of its history is frequently appealed to as a proof of its being a Revelation from God.

* One is well known, in which Seneca seems to foretell the discovery of America.

But no Muhammadan will maintain that the mere fact of a religion being rapidly diffused or widely extended is a strong argument for its truth. Buddhism at present numbers more followers than Muhammadanism, or even Christianity; yet we may safely assert that Buddhism never could become the religion of a highly civilized and educated people like the inhabitants of Europe and America. The spread or prevalence of a religion depends on various circumstances—such as the character and condition of the people among whom it is introduced, the adaptation of the religion to their tastes, the means employed to propagate it, and so on.

The following circumstances will explain, in a satisfactory manner, the extension of Muhammadanism, without supposing it to be a Divine Revelation.

Causes of its temporary success.

1. There is much truth in Muhammadanism. We have seen that Christianity agrees very remarkably with Natural Religion. Now, Muhammadanism acknowledges the general truth of Christianity and borrows largely from the Bible. The unity of God—His wisdom, power, sovereignty, and providence, are fully admitted by Muhammad. In many systems of religion, the idea of God is shadowy and uninfluential,—He is merely nature, or little more; but the God of Muhammad is a *person*, and exercises *will*; He is a present God, who issues distinct commands, and who must be implicitly obeyed.

Here, then, is important truth. A religion, containing such doctrines, possesses an element of strength and endurance within itself.

2. Yet Muhammadanism is not a religion opposed to the depraved tastes and passions of man. As it acknowledges no mysteries, it is flattering to his pride of intellect. It scarcely speaks of the deep corruption and alienation of

ligations; the smallness of the taxes which it imposed; the simplicity, completeness, and consistency, of its whole code (of law); and the disunion and independence and differences of every kind, which subsisted among the Pagan, Christian, and Jewish Arabs.”*

8. Add the important consideration that the Christianity of Arabia, Persia, Asia Minor, &c., with which the Muhammadan system came in contact, was exceedingly corrupt; and, by departing from the doctrines and precepts of the Bible, had lost its strength and vitality. Christians farther believe that the professors of such a corrupt system deserved signal chastisement, and that Muhammad was a scourge in the hand of God for the purpose of inflicting that chastisement.

These considerations will clearly shew that the success of Muhammadanism was nothing miraculous.

V. But I must hasten to consider the great proof on

The Kurán itself which Muhammadans rely, as establishing no miracle.

ing that the Kurán is inspired. They say the Kurán itself is a miracle.

In the Kurán this is repeatedly referred to. “This Kurán could not have been composed by any except God; it is sent down from the Lord of all creatures.” (Sura 10th.) “Verily if men and genii were purposely assembled that they might produce a book like this Kurán, they could not produce one like unto it, although the one of them assisted the other.” (Sura 17th.) “If ye be in doubt concerning that Revelation which we have sent down unto our servant, produce a chapter like unto it.” (Sura 2nd.)

When it is said that the Kurán is incomparable as a composition, the meaning may be either that the *sentiments* are so, or that the *language* is so, or that *both* are so. Regarding the sentiments any one can judge who is able to read the Kurán either in the Arabic, or in any of the lan-

* Lane’s “Selections from the Kurán” p. 56.

guages into which it has been translated,—Latin, English, Hindustaní, &c. Certainly, the Kurán is far from an incomparable book in point of sentiment. The historian Gibbon calls it “an endless incoherent rhapsody of fable and precept and declamation—which sometimes crawls in the dust, and sometimes is lost in the clouds.”* This language is, perhaps, too severe; but, at all events, no educated European will express any great admiration of the Kurán. Much of it is borrowed from the Bible; but, as a whole, it is far less simple, far less pathetic, and far less sublime than the Bible. Such, at least, is the opinion of educated Europeans, whether Christians or unbelievers, and also, if I mistake not, of educated Hindus.

Again, with respect to the style. Unhappily, only Arabs can properly estimate the elegance, force, or harmony of the language. Generally speaking, they agree in stating that the style of the Kurán is singularly beautiful. Yet some learned Musalmáns have questioned this.† I may be permitted to remark that as the dialect of Arabic in which the Kurán is written, may now be called almost a dead language, it is extremely difficult to estimate its merits and demerits. The Kurán is written in a kind of balanced prose, with frequent rhyming terminations. This kind of composition was once much admired among the Syrian Christians, from whom it has been thought Muhammad borrowed it;‡ but in Europe neither the poetic cadence, nor the jingling sound, is deemed suitable to prose composition. It is difficult to say whether the Arabs or Europeans are right in this matter, and whether this feature of the Kurán is more a beauty or a blemish.

* Gibbon, chap. l. p. 265. (Milman's Edit.) On a question of composition Gibbon's authority is of no small weight.

† Pococke's *Specimen Historiæ Arabum* p. 224. (White's Edition.) Marracci, *Prodromus* iii. p. 75.

‡ Lee's *Martyn's Tracts* p. 124, 135.

But even supposing the Kurán to be decidedly the most eloquent and sublime book in the Arabic language, the fact does not prove much. In almost every literature, there is one book which is confessedly the best in the language. No other Greek poet equals Homer; no other English writer is so sublime as Milton; no Sanskrit author can rival Kálidása, in the flexibility of his language and the beauty of his descriptions. But it does not follow that the works produced by these writers are inspired. In like manner, we may freely admit that Muhammad was a man of an ardent and poetic cast of mind, who could utter powerful strains of eloquence; but assuredly that will not establish the fact of his being inspired, and the "Apostle of God."

Internal Evidence.

The subject which we have just been considering, might be brought under either the external or the internal evidence;—we have noticed it under the external, as the Muhammadans speak of the excellence of the Kurán as a standing *miracle*. We come now to consider what is properly internal.

- I. One convincing argument against the Kurán is found in the glaring contradictions which
The Kurán
full of contra-
dictions. exist in it.

The Muhammadan doctors are well aware of these contradictions, and they speak of "the two faces of the Kurán." The explanation which they give of this remarkable fact is that God *abrogated* part of what He had first commanded. Muhammad himself refers to the same thing: "Whatever verse we shall abrogate or cause thee to forget, we shall bring a better than it or one like it." (Sura 2nd.) It is rather extraordinary that an earlier part of the Kurán is sometimes held to abrogate a later. Thus in Sura 16th we read of wine as among the proofs of God's goodness and wisdom. "Of the fruit of palm.

trees and grapes, ye obtain an inebriating liquor and also good nourishment. Verily herein is a sign to people who understand." But in Sura 2nd we read: "They will ask thee concerning wine and lots. Answer, in both there is great sin, and also some thing of use to men, but their sinfulness is greater than their use." And in Sura 5th, "O true believers, surely wine, and lots, and images, and divining arrows, are an abomination of the work of Satan." Here the earlier chapters are held to abrogate the later.

It is possible that, in regard to any particular act, God might command it at one time, and forbid it at another; but it is not possible that He could declare a principle to be true to-day and reverse it to-morrow.

It is easy to discover a very different spirit in the chapters said to have been revealed at Mecca, from those said to have been revealed at Medina. The latter are far more cruel and exterminating.

The learned Al Jahedhi maintained that the Kurán was a body which could be turned either into a man or a beast.*

II. A powerful argument against the Kurán is drawn

The Kurán from the fact that it accuses the Bible of
falsely accus-
es the Bible. being corrupted.

Muhammad often accuses the Jews, and sometimes the Christians, of corrupting the Scriptures.

"They dislocate the words from their places, and have forgotten a part of what they were admonished." "And for those who say, We are Christians, we have received their covenant; but they have forgotten part of what they were admonished." "O ye who have received the Scriptures, now is our Apostle come unto you, to make manifest many things which ye concealed in the Scriptures." (Sura 5th)—"Wee unto them who transcribe [corruptly] the book [of the law]" (Sura 2nd).

* Pococke's Specimen, p. 226.

It is true that Muhammad speaks somewhat cautiously, and generally accuses them of *concealing* and *misinterpreting*, rather than *corrupting*, the Scriptures. But whether he charges them with "dislocation" or corruption, he injures himself, for the genuineness of the Old and New Testaments is capable of most complete demonstration, as we have seen in Letter III.

His followers go much farther than he, and charge both Jews and Christians with grossly corrupting the word of God. But we must not lay the errors of his followers to his account.

III. Muhammad admitted the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, and maintained that his own system was in perfect harmony with the whole Bible.

The Bible and the Kurán contradictory.

We find, on the contrary, that both in facts and doctrines the Kurán is often irreconcilably opposed to the Bible. It is impossible that both the Bible and the Kurán can be true.

The contradictions are almost innumerable; we shall notice only a few as specimens.

One of Noah's sons (said by the commentators to be Canaan) was drowned in the deluge (Sura 11). The wife of Pharoah saved Moses (Sura 28). Moses and Joshua are represented as having gone on a journey for a long time (literally, eighty years and upwards) to a place where two seas met (Sura 17). The whole story is inconsistent with Scripture.—The birds and mountains used to unite with David in praising God (Sura 21.) The wind was subject to Solomon (Ibid). Solomon was driven from his kingdom (Ibid). Devils built for Solomon;—other devils dived for him;—others worked, bound in chains (Ibid). Solomon knew the language of birds and ants; and they used to speak to him (Sura 22). The story of Queen Bilkis (Sura 27) is a very foolish fable drawn from a confused

idea of the history of the Queen of Sheba. Thousands of dead Israelites were raised to life (Sura 2). Ezra and his ass died for a hundred years, and were then raised to life (Ibid). Mary, the mother of Christ, was the daughter of Imran (Amram), and sister of Aaron. (Sura 14). Jesus caused a table to descend from heaven (Sura 5).

But by far the most important difference remains. Muhammad says that Jesus was not crucified, but taken up into heaven without dying (Sura 4), and that Jesus is not the Son of God (Id.)

Again, Muhammad falsely asserts that Jesus used these words: "O children of Israel—I bring good tidings of an Apostle, who shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad." (Sura 61.) (Ahmad has almost the same meaning as Muhammad).

These contradictions are very important. For example, if Jesus Christ did not really die for the sins of men, then the Christian religion rests on a foundation of sand, and the New Testament is full of false and ruinous doctrine. No one, then, who believes the Bible to be true can receive Muhammadanism as a revelation from God.

IV. The absence of any intimation in the Bible that

No prophecies in the Bible regarding Muhammad such a prophet as Muhammad was about to come, is a strong argument against his claims.

If Muhammad were what he professes to be, it is hardly conceivable that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures (which in that case must be also true) should not foretell the coming of so illustrious a personage. In the Old Testament the prophecies respecting Jesus Christ are exceedingly numerous;—surely then, if Muhammad had been sent by God, the prophecies respecting him in the New Testament would have been no less so. Muhammad seems to have been aware of this. But he falsifies the New Testament. It contains no such passage as the one last quote^d

The only passage at all resembling it is in John xvi. 7 in which Christ promises to send his disciples the *Paracletos*, or *Comforter*. If this word were changed to *Periclytos*, it would signify *illustrious*, which the name Ahmad, or Muhammad, might also signify. But, then, by corrupting the text in this way, any man may find himself predicted in the Scriptures. Moreover, Christ expressly tells his disciples that the *Paracletos* was the Holy Spirit.

The followers of Muhammad find various other predictions respecting their teacher; but their interpretations are all childishly foolish. They apply Psalm l. 2. to Muhammad, because the words *perfection of beauty* are rendered in some Syriac version *a renowned crown*, which may be rendered in Arabic *akhlā mahmūdā*, the last of these words being very like *Muhammad*.*

They refer Deut. xxxiii. 2, to Moses, Christ, and Muhammad.†

These examples will suffice,—the other alleged predictions regarding Muhammad are equally capricious applications of Scripture.

V. A strong argument against the Kurān is, that it contains no new revelation of truth. It No new truth revealed in the Kurān. teaches little that people had not heard before. Much of it is taken from the Bible; but, by omitting such sublime doctrines as the Trinity and Atonement, it divests the Bible of its essential characteris-

* Pococke's Specimen, p. 15, 189.

† (Deut. xxxiii. 2). "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir under them; he shined forth from Mount Paran."

The Musalmāns say that Sinai is the place where Moses gave the law; that Seir points to Christ, and Paran to Mahammad. But Christ had not the slightest connexion with Mount Seir; nor Muhammad with Mount Paran.

(Ps. l. 2) "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." In the original there is no resemblance to the name Muhammad; the words are *mikhāl yosif*. Even had the sound resembled the word *Mahammad*, it could have proved nothing.

tics. Again, much of the Kurán is taken from the traditions of the Jews ;—many of the things which are now considered most absurd, were not invented by Muhammad, but borrowed from the traditions of the Christians. Something was taken from the views of the Zoroastrians ; and something from those of the Heathen Arabs. There is exceedingly little in the Kurán that is really original.*

VI. The Kurán contains many things that are inconsistent

The Kurán opposed to science and philosophy. ent with science, philosophy, and science and philosophy. common sense.

These are such as the following.

1. (Sura 18) The sun sets in a spring of black mud. Dhulkarnain (supposed to be Alexander the Great) who found out the fact just stated, also arrived at the place where the sun rises. These things are told in a way that is inconsistent with the fact of the sphericity and motion of the Earth. (Sura 15) Shooting stars are flames darted at devils who are "listening by stealth" to what is said in heaven. The heavenly towers (which are supposed to be the signs of the Zodiac,) are guarded from devils, who are driven away with

* The work of Dr. Sprenger has been published since the first edition of this work, in which the above remarks appeared ; and new facts have been supplied in abundance which prove that little of the Kurán is original. The presence in Arabia of a large body both of Jews and Christians was the main cause of the diffusion of correct ideas regarding the Divine nature. Qoss, a distinguished Arabian whom Muhammad had met in youth, earnestly inculcated the doctrine of the Divine unity. Ommayah and others did the same ; and the efforts of such able men had produced a deep and extensive impression. Sprenger is undoubtedly justified in his assertion that "Islam is not the work of Muhammad." He calls it the offspring of the spirit of the time—the voice of the Arabian people." He adds the strong remark that Muhammad "defiled it by his immorality and perverseness of mind ;—and most of the objectionable doctrines are his."

† The whole story of Dhulkarnain is opposed to history. If he was Alexander, as held by nearly all Muhammadans, the things asserted of him are false. If he was not Alexander, who was he ? History recognizes no such personage.

stones. (Sura, 16, 31.) The Earth is motionless. The mountains were thrown upon it, to make it so.

2. Muhammad affirms the doctrine of *fate* in its most absolute and unqualified sense.

"The sixth great point of faith, which the Muhammadans are taught by the Kurán to believe, is God's absolute decree and predestination both of good and evil. For the orthodox doctrine is that whatever hath or shall come to pass in this world, whether it be good, or whether it be bad, proceedeth entirely from the divine will, and is irrevocably fixed and recorded from all eternity in the preserved table,—God having secretly predetermined not only the adverse and prosperous fortune of every person in this world, in the most minute particulars, but also his faith or infidelity, his obedience or disobedience, and consequently his everlasting happiness or misery after death, which fate or predestination it is not possible, by any foresight or wisdom, to avoid. Of this doctrine Muhammad makes great use in his Kurán for the advancement of his designs; encouraging his followers to fight without fear, and even desperately, for the propagation of their faith."*

This doctrine of fate is both philosophically false, and practically productive of most pernicious consequences.

3. The permission of polygamy is a very serious objection to the Kurán. Reason and experience alike declare that polygamy is a highly objectionable practice—hurtful in all respects. It is not only inconsistent with pure morality, but irreconcilable with a high state of civilization.

VII. A strong argument against the Kurán can be drawn from its persecuting principles. Its language is almost always fierce and intolerant. Passages like the following are occurring constantly. "Verily those who disbelieve in

The Kurán
fierce and in-
tolerant.

* Sale's Koran, Vol. i. p. 187.

our signs, we will surely cast to be^d broiled in hell fire. So often as their skins shall be well burned, we will give them other skins in exchange, that they may taste the sharper torments." (Sura 4th).

The descriptions of hell in the Kurán are not so much terrible, as disgusting and hideous. It is also evident that Muhammad delights—revels—in depicting the horrors of interminable damnation. This is horrible—it is fiend-like. There are no meltings of heart—no stirrings of compassion—no sorrow over the lost. Nothing appears but exultation and glatted revenge. The hotter the hell into which his enemies are cast, the louder is Muhammad's shout of triumph. Oh how unlike is this to the conduct of Jesus Christ, who, when his enemies had nailed him to the cross and were heaping insult on his dying agonies, cried with his last trembling accents: "Father! forgive them—they know not what they do."

Muhammad extended his religion by the sword. He openly avowed it as a principle that he did so. Thus we read, (Sura 22nd.) "Fight in defence of God's true religion, as it behoveth you to fight for the same;"—and so in many other places. Accordingly, no fewer than twenty-seven military expeditions of Muhammad have been reckoned up; and of smaller actions or skirmishes some enumerate as many as forty-eight.*

VIII. The doctrines of the Kurán are exceedingly defective and erroneous in many points.

The Kurán
erroneous in
doctrine.

The character of God is not rightly exhibited. His holiness is not well understood. His love almost entirely disappears.

The real character of sin—its exceeding heinousness—and the deep corruption of human nature, are not at all fully stated.—The necessity of Atonement is not admitted. This is so much a doctrine of pure Revelation that we

* Abulfeda, p. 196, 197. (Edit. of Reiske and Adler.)

need not greatly wonder at this; but the Kurán is equally defective in its views of sanctification,—the necessity of which is scarcely admitted. But enlightened reason tells us that without the purification of our hearts we cannot either serve God aright or be truly happy. Of this fundamental truth Muhammad seems to have been ignorant.

Love to God, and love to man, are also most indistinctly, if at all, set forth. Yet what is religion without love? A body without a soul.

Active benevolence is not inculcated, and could not be produced, by the Kurán.

IV. The character of Muhammad himself furnishes a

Bad character powerful argument against the inspiration of Muhammad. of the Kurán.

Intellectually, as we have seen, he stood high; but morally low. A Muhammadan author informs us that the prophet confessed that he delighted in women and perfumes.* Licentiousness seems to have grown upon him in the latter part of this life, and up to its very close. He had fifteen wives; at the time of his death he had nine.† Jealousy was one of his distinguishing characteristics. Among a revengeful people, he was preeminently cruel and unforgiving.‡

* Ismael ibn Ali. See Marracci, p. 83.

† Abulfeda, p. 195. This list does not include Miriam, a courtesan.

‡ It will be interesting to note the description which the laborious inquiries of Sprenger have led him to give of Muhammad.

"The temperament of Muhammad was melancholic, and in the highest degree nervous."—He was "superstitious;"—thus, "to render a bad dream harmless, he used to spit three times over his left shoulder."—"He was a poet;" and possessed "a vivid imagination."—He possessed "energy and enthusiasm;" "firmness and perseverance."—His character was deeply marked by "cunning."—One of his most distinguishing characteristics was "dark and bloody fanaticism."

The question has often been asked: If Muhammad was not a prophet, whether was he a fanatic or an impostor? It is possible that he may have been partly both. Unquestionably he possessed a warm excitable imagination, along with a false and selfish heart,—and it is difficult to say where the suggestions of the one may have ended and those of the other begun.*

X. A philosophical writer uses the following weighty language in characterizing Muhammadanism. "A Prophet without miracles,—a faith without mysteries,—and a morality without love, which has encouraged a thirst for blood and which began and ended in the most unbounded sensuality."† A Saviour without Atonement we may add, for, now at least, Muhammad is spoken of by his followers as a Saviour. Rightly to describe such a system, is to refute it. Oh how unlike the religion which man—fearfully fallen, but still capable of rising to fellowship with God—needs to redeem, and purify, and bless him!

Enough has been said to shew that Muhammad and the Kurán have very little title to respect, and that their claim to inspiration is altogether fictitious. Into the character of Muhammadanism as it now is, we need hardly enter. The puerile and ridiculous traditions and observances which have been added to the system originally propounded by Muhammad, may deceive the grossly ignorant; but none of the educated youth of India—the class for which

* In estimating the character of Muhammad we ought not to forget how much he was under the influence of a frightful disease. Sprenger says: "He was for some time a complete maniac; and the fit after which he assumed his office [as a Prophet], was a paroxysm of cataleptic insanity." "The fits assumed more and more an epileptic character."

It is important to observe that in so far as Muhammad may have been affected with insanity, he must be absolved from the charge of imposture.

† F. Schlegel. "Philosophy of History." Lecture xii.

this volume is intended—will be disposed to receive them otherwise than with a smile of contempt. I once thought of inserting in this place an account of Muhammad's celebrated "Night journey," as a specimen of Musalmán traditions; but I cannot bring myself to waste time and space on such folly. It is worse than silly; it is absolutely profane.

May the day soon arrive when the nations that have so long trusted in him of Mecca, shall recognize in Jesus of Nazareth, the Prophet that they need to guide them to the knowledge of all heavenly truth;—yea, and more than a prophet—a Priest also, who atones for their sins and ever lives to make intercession for them,—and a King to defend and rule over them, whose kingdom (unlike that of Muhammad) is not of this world, and who summons them to contests and victories the most truly heroic and glorious—spiritual contests, spiritual victories!

I am, &c.

NOTE.

Since the last edition of these Letters appeared several important works on the subject of Muhammadanism have issued from the press. We may, in particular, refer to a series of articles in various Nos. of the *Calcutta Review* during the years 1853-4-5. These papers (which are understood to be from the pen of Mr. W. Muir) are very learned, full of thought, and eminently suggestive; and we are happy to learn that they will probably appear in a separate form. We regret that our space will hardly allow us to make quotations.

1. The writer differs from Sprenger in regard to the personal influence of Muhammad in the formation of the Muhammadan faith. He holds that "it was Mahomet that formed Islam; it was not Islam, nor any preexisting Moslem spirit, that moulded Mahomet." Sprenger, on the contrary, calls Islam "the voice of the Arabian people." Still, Mr. Muir admits that the "materials" were there, and that Muhammad was a workman of "unparalleled art and rare supremacy of mind" who fashioned them into shape.

2. With regard to Muhammad's moral character, Mr. Muir's estimate coincides with the views expressed in the preceding pages. He says: "The heart of Mahomet was vindictive and revengeful." "Am-

bition, rapine, assassination, lust, are the ~~undenied~~ features of his later life."

3. With regard to the character of Islam itself we read: "It presents a wonderful adaptation to fallen humanity; for the spurious imitation of godliness satisfies the serious mind, while the laxity of its moral code, and the compatibility of its external observances with inner irreligion present no barrier to the sensualist."

4. With regard to the question whether Muhammad was an impostor or a fanatic, Mr. Muir powerfully states as at least a possibility the idea of "a diabolical inspiration." At all events "Mahomet deliberately yielded to a compromise with evil," and even from a pretty early period had recourse to fraud.

5. With regard to Muhammad's treatment of the Jewish and Christian scriptures we read: "The popular impression that would attribute to Mahomet either the formal cancelment of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, or any imputation against their perfect genuineness and authority, is entirely mistaken. No expression regarding them ever escaped the lips of Mahomet but those of the most implicit reverence and highest eulogy." This fact is of importance in arguing with Muhammadans. It is also fatal to the claims of Muhammad; for if the Scriptures be what he admits them to be, the Kuran (which is in so many things irreconcilably opposed to them) must be false.

6. Mr. Muir's view of the terrible disease under which Muhammad laboured agrees with that which has been quoted from Sprenger. The excited states and ecstatic swoons connected with it "perhaps suggested to his own mind the idea of inspiration, and were undoubtedly taken by his followers to be evidence of it."

LETTER XIV.

SPECIAL APPLICATION OF THE ARGUMENT OF THE
THREE PRECEDING LETTERS.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

IN the last three letters we have entered with considerable minuteness into an examination of the evidences of Hinduism, Pársism, and Muhammadanism. We have done so, because these three religions are still very extensively followed in India. Doubtless you have been interested in attending to the amount of evidence possessed by these systems respectively. The discussion in which we have been engaged is sufficient to convince any unprejudiced student in India of the folly of regarding any one of these religions as a Revelation from God. We have seen that the most boasted part of their evidence entirely vanishes at the touch of enlightened reason.

But we can derive still another benefit from the discussion which has occupied the last three letters. *It greatly strengthens the evidence in favour of Christianity.* Observe how it does so.

We saw in Letter VII. that Christianity was either from God or man. We compared it, at some length, with the works of God; and we saw how beautifully it harmonizes both with Nature and with Providence. Something was also said about its non-resemblance to the works of man. But this latter part of the argument can now be much better appreciated; for we have lately been examining

the kind of religions that man is capable of inventing. And let it not be forgotten that Hinduism, Pársism, and Muhammadanism were the productions of the ablest men of some of the greatest nations of the earth. In these systems we see the best sort of religions that man can invent. Had Christianity been of human origin, it would have resembled them; at all events, it could hardly have excelled them. It must have resembled them in their imperfection of character and deficiency of evidence.

But how exceedingly unlike them Christianity is in character, we have seen in letters IX and X; and, as to evidence, you must have felt, my young friend, as we tried them by the very same tests in succession as we had applied to the Bible, that the difference was infinite between their unsubstantial, shadowy claims, and the solid, commanding argument in support of Christianity.

Had Christianity been of human invention, it would not have excelled Hinduism,—for Hinduism, in its philosophical aspect at least, is the elaborated production of minds possessed of wonderful acuteness and great dialectic power.

Nor would it have excelled Pársism,—for Pársism, as restored under the Sasanian dynasty, is a reformation of religion effected by the ablest minds of Persia after they had enjoyed the opportunity of coming in contact with Grecian philosophy,* Judaism, and Christianity.

Nor would it have excelled Muhammadanism,—for Muhammad, a man of superior intellect, great energy, and enlarged experience, brought forward an *eclectic* system, that is, a system of doctrines selected from Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Paganism, so that he ought to have produced the very best possible specimen of a humanly-devised religion.

* Greek literature was assiduously cultivated under the Parthian kings who preceded Ardashír Bábegan, and to some extent afterwards.

And certainly there was nothing in the country, or the age of the world, in which Christianity arose—nothing in the talents of its promulgators, or the circumstances in which they were placed, that could have warranted the hope of the new religion excelling the most elaborate systems of Eastern faith and wisdom. Religion was in a fearfully low condition in Judea when Christianity arose. Except the abhorrence of idolatry, there was hardly one feature in the system of the Jews on which we can dwell with complacency. The pure religion of the Old Testament they had “made void” by the “traditions of men.” The spirit had fled—the carcass only was left.

What then could the illiterate fishermen of Galilee have been expected to excogitate but some meaningless system of rites and ceremonies—some crude and narrow superstition—some baser form of corrupted Judaism, at once repulsive and intolerant? But how different is the fact!

The truth, then, is that other religions are unable to stand the scrutiny of Reason, and only appear the more objectionable the longer we ponder them; whereas, Christianity calmly invites and fully sustains investigation, and discloses only the more of her majestic strength and beauty, the longer and steadier the gaze that we fix upon her. How is the fact to be explained? Why does Christianity stand single and apart from other religions in her *evidence*? Only one reason can be assigned. It is because she stands single and apart from other religions in her *origin*. They are the inventions of man; *she* is the gift of God.

So far as the Internal Evidence is concerned, you can easily test for yourself the truth of what has now been asserted. Take the Bible, and deliberately compare it with the Vedas and Purānas of the Hindus, the Zendavesta of the Pārsis, and the Kurān of the Musalmāns. Happily, several of the authoritative Hindu works have been rendered into English, so that it is easy to compare them

with the Bible. So with the Kur'án. It is much to be deplored that hitherto we have no satisfactory version of the Zend-avesta; for, of all arguments to convince intelligent Pársis of the falsehood of Zoroastrianism, perhaps none would be so convincing as the perusal of their own Scriptures, and a thoughtful comparison of them with the Bible.*

In conclusion allow me to remark that, in characterizing the various systems of religion that have now been brought under review, I have, as far as possible, abstained from using language that could wound the feelings of any candid Hindu, Pársi or Muhammadan. Occasionally a strong term of disapproval has been employed; but in these cases you will probably admit that the interests of truth imperatively demand the expression. While it would be wrong wantonly or unnecessarily to pain the conscientious followers of any religion, it would be still worse to hesitate in affixing the proper epithet to falsehood or impurity. If possible, we will avoid wounding the feelings of our Native friends; but, at all events and at all hazards, we must speak the truth and call things by their appropriate names.

I am, &c.

* This want will very soon be supplied. Translations of the Zend-avesta are about to be published in German and English, by learned men in Europe. Indeed, the German translation has already been partly published.

LETTER XV.

THE EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE FOR CHRISTIANITY.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

It is desirable that these Letters should contain a satisfactory statement of the evidences of the Christian Religion, but that the statement should be brief. It may now be well to draw as speedily as possible to a conclusion, lest you and other Native students should be repelled by the size of the book from entering on the consideration of the subject at all. There is however, one branch of the evidence for the Christian Religion which we must not overlook; for the statement of the argument would be incomplete were it not included. It is called the *Experimental Evidence*.

It was mentioned above, on page 97, that at least some portion of the evidence for Christianity is adapted to all minds, and that this is a distinguishing mark of the Christian Revelation;—and farther, that the Bible itself exhorts to “prove,” or try, “all things, and hold fast that which is good,” and be able to assign reasons for our faith, instead of holding an unreflecting, unreasoning belief. But it is evident that the argument from miracles, prophecy, or history, is not exactly suited to all minds, since it requires some amount of learning to enable a man to appreciate its conclusiveness and force. Had there existed no other kind of argument than this, a large portion of the members of the Christian Church would have possessed little or no evidence for

their belief,—their religion would have been almost wholly dependent on tradition and authority. The evidence from miracles, prophecy, and history, is abundantly sufficient to command the assent of all educated men; but it cannot be appreciated by the uneducated.

But there is one branch of the Evidence for Christianity that is level to the capacity of the poorest and most illiterate. It is not he who is the most learned, that understands it best,—but he who is the humblest, the most earnest, the most sincere. Hence it often happens that the peasant sees the application of this argument more clearly than the philosopher. It depends on the *moral* state of a man more than the *intellectual*, whether or not he shall appreciate this argument. If his heart be hard, selfish, worldly, ungodly,—then, even though he possess the intellect of a Newton, this evidence is not for him,—he cannot comprehend it. If his heart be tender, teachable, truth-loving, godly,—then, even although perhaps he may be unable to write or read, he can comprehend the argument.

What, then, is the Experimental Evidence for Christianity? When any remedy for an evil, or any means of effecting a desired end, has been recommended to us, we are always anxious to apply this kind of evidence. In other words, we are anxious to *try and see*. Suppose you are desirous of learning Sanskrit, but are somewhat afraid that its difficulty will be insuperable, then, instead of consulting a vast number of books or questioning many Pandits on the point, the best and simplest mode of settling the question would just be to *try and see*. When you test Christianity by its Experimental Evidence, you do the very same thing,—you *try and see*.

Or, let me suppose that you are sick and have consulted many physicians, and tried many medicines, in vain. Sup-

pose now that another physician comes forward, who professes to have a perfect knowledge of your case and the ability to cure it. Having been often before disappointed in your expectations from physicians you are perhaps not very eager to employ another; but certain friends of yours tell you that they once suffered as you now do, and, by the skill of the same physician who offers to prescribe for you, have obtained complete relief. You then consent to put yourself under his care. He comes, and accurately describes to you all the more remarkable symptoms of your case. This encourages you to follow his advice. He administers certain medicines, and prescribes a certain regimen. You simply act as he directs; and in a few days you find a wonderful change. Sickness, languor, pain, are evidently departing; health, animation, bodily ease, are fast returning. Every day convinces you more strongly of the skill of the physician. Finally, you feel yourself quite restored—perfectly well. Suppose now that some one is heard ridiculing the physician and the medicine, and offering to prove that the one is a quack, and the other a poison. You would simply say, No;—I have experimental evidence of the contrary,—for I *was* sick, and *am* well; and the physician with his medicine has wrought the cure.

It is just the same with Christianity. It is a medicine prescribed by Christ, who may be called the physician of souls. Your mind is diseased,—your soul is sick, nigh unto death; the understanding is blinded,—the heart is corrupt. You have tried the medicine which Hinduism or Pársism offers, and you have derived no advantage from its use. When Christianity is first presented to you, you expect little assistance from it, and are scarcely disposed to employ its aid. But certain friends—once Hindus, Pársis, or Musulmáns,—inform you that Christianity has cured their mental sickness; and, at their

Christianity
is a medicine
for the sick.

earnest request, you consent to call the physician in. What then happens?

I. In the first place, the physician describes your case—
 The Bible accurately describes our case. its symptoms, your sufferings, your sensations of every kind. In other words, Christ in the Bible declares to you the whole character and condition of your moral being. The Bible speaks, and speaks so decidedly that there is no possibility of misunderstanding what it says, as to your feelings in reference to God. It utters very plain and very stern things—things not at all agreeable to the heart of man. So that, if the Bible erred in this matter, the error would certainly be found out. If it spoke of far-off worlds and their inhabitants, you might not be able to test its truth; but you *can* test its truth when it undertakes to declare the thoughts and feelings that fill your own bosom. If it spoke in dark mystic language, you might not be able to decide whether the oracle was false or true; but you *are* able when it proclaims its opinions in clear, and definite, and unambiguous phraseology. If it uttered very pleasing, flattering things, the vain heart of man might easily be induced to believe them without instituting any careful inquiry as to their being *true* things, and so error would pass undetected; but when the Bible proclaims the most unpalatable and humiliating things respecting you, it is most certain that if any error or exaggeration has crept into the statement, you will be quick-sighted enough to point it out and rebut the odious charge.

All these tests apply to the statements of the Bible regarding man. Without qualification or exception it charges every human being as one who is by nature ungodly—dead in trespasses and sins—regardless of his Maker's glory, and standing in need of a total renovation of his moral being. This is a tremendous accusation. No wonder if men wince under it, and seek means to repel it.

No wonder if many, who cannot bear to have their pride brought down, throw away the Bible in disgust, as soon as they read so sweeping an indictment. Were a man who believes himself to be in perfect health, to be told that he was a leper, the first thing he would do, would be to deny the charge with indignation. And this many do when the Bible prefers its accusation against them. But a wise man cannot rest satisfied with this. He will anxiously look whether there be not some ground for the terrible announcement. He will listen to the declarations of the Bible, and he will then scrutinize the workings of his own heart and see whether these are what the Bible declares.

Now the first part of the Experimental Evidence consists in finding that what the Bible says of our moral state is true. We find that the Bible thoroughly understands us. A person who went through the process of comparison I have now been speaking of, exclaimed ; " I see that a man's history can be written before he is born." He found the record of his own mental experience already in the Bible,—he found that the Bible's description of the heart was a faithful description of *his* heart. He was astonished to see his own secret history thus revealed ; but, however much astonished, he could not deny the truth of the description.

II. In the second place, the Bible not only describes the disease, but also prescribes the remedy. The Bible declares that the sickness is not desperate. It reveals the mode in which a perfect cure can be wrought. It promises that if certain means are faithfully employed, a complete restoration may confidently be expected.

Here again, we can *try and see*. If we faithfully and perseveringly use the prescribed remedy and still find that the disease is not abated, we shall soon come to the conviction that the physician after is not equal to the task he undertook. He may know

the malady; but he has not skill to cure the malady. But if, on the contrary, we find that the faithful and persevering use of the remedy does bring relief and that all the promises made by the physician are fulfilled, then we need no farther proof of his skill and the value of his medicine. The disease is gone—that is the proof.

Now, there are thousands and tens of thousands who can calmly and confidently declare that this has actually been their own experience. They *were* sick, and *are* well; they were blind, and they see. They have sustained a complete revolution in their inner man. The Bible said: "Ask, and ye shall receive,"—they asked, and they received. They have undergone that wonderful change which the Bible promises. They formerly dreaded God; now they dread Him not,—their feeling towards Him is love, chastened by reverential awe. Formerly, they trembled to think of death and eternity; now, they can look forward to the future with serenity and joy. "Receive Christ," said the Bible, "and the terrific vision of coming wrath will pass away";—they have received Christ, and the promise is accomplished. "Receive Christ," said the Bible again, "and all things will become new"—new thoughts, feelings, desires, hopes, will spring up within the heart. This also has taken place. Thus all the promises in the Bible are prophecies; and these, when fulfilled, necessarily lead us to believe that the Bible has indeed proceeded from that omniscient God to whom the most distant future and the darkest recesses of the human heart stand revealed in the clear light of day.

Such is a brief statement of the Experimental Evidence for Christianity. And now, in conclusion, Apply the test! my young friend, my most earnest desire and intreaty is that you would make the experiment,—that you would apply the test. Take the Bible, and study it with deep attention. Study it with earnest prayer that Almighty

God may enable you to see the truth. Then, compare its declarations with those of your own conscience. If you find that the Bible correctly describes your case, then farther, try the remedy it holds out. Ask God to enable you to receive the salvation it offers. Give yourself to Jesus Christ. Let His words of tender invitation sink into your heart—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Go to Him, and see whether you can obtain the rest which He has promised.

My dear young friend, you will do this, if you are among the "weary and heavy laden" ones whom Christ addresses. He who knows himself to be sick, will apply to the physician. He who feels himself a sinner, will seek a Saviour. Seek the Saviour Christ; and assuredly you will never seek another. He will bestow all you need for this world and the world to come;—you will have peace and joy in believing—yes, "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

"These things we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

I am, &c.

LETTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

Our task is accomplished ; and these Letters must now close. Scarcely any thing more remains for me to do than to say farewell.

We have gone over the various subjects which properly enter into an elementary statement of the Evidences of the Christian Religion. We have attended both to the External and Internal Evidence. We have considered the chief arguments by which we can demonstrate the antiquity, genuineness, and credibility, of the New Testament. We have also examined the arguments that are drawn from miracles and prophecy in support of the Christian Revelation. The dissimilarity between the Bible and the productions of man,—its beautiful harmony with the works of God both in Nature and Providence,—its entire consistency with itself,—its accordance with Natural Religion,—the sublime peculiarities in which it stands aloof from all other systems whether of philosophy or religion,—these things have all been considered. We have also examined the evidence which can be adduced in support of Hinduism, Pársísm, and Muhammadanism, applying precisely the same tests to them as we had previously applied to Christianity; and we have found that none of these systems will bear the investigation from which Christianity has come forth triumphant. Lastly, we have referred to the Experimental Evidence—certainly not the least remarkable of the many

proofs that can be brought forward in support of the inspiration of the Bible. Much more might be said on the subject of the Christian evidences; but the outline that has been given is, I believe, sufficient to convince the sincere and candid inquirer that Christianity is not of man, but of God. And now, my dear young friend, I have but two or three parting words to address to you.

It is quite possible that all the reasonings in which we have been engaged have wrought little or no conviction in your mind, of the truth of Christianity. What may that be owing to? You may perhaps reply, to the inconclusiveness of the argument. But there is another cause by which the effect may have been produced. The impression which any argument makes on the mind depends not solely on the force and conclusiveness of the argument, but also on the state of the mind to which it is addressed. The mind may be *intellectually* disqualified for receiving it. Reasoning, however sound and cogent, will fail of producing conviction in a mind that is incapable of comprehending it. An insane man will fail to see the conclusiveness of the demonstrations in Euclid.

Or, the mind may be *morally* disqualified for receiving the argument. Man is not a being of mere intellect; he is possessed of feelings and passions. On certain objects of inquiry, such as mathematical and physical science, these feelings and passions are not likely to come into play, and little except intellect will be in exercise. But on many other subjects—as, for instance, political questions—quick, keen feelings are almost certain to mingle in the discussion. Hence, while in matters of physical science we see calm and dispassionate research, we behold nearly all political inquiries conducted with vehement and passionate debate.

It is exceedingly important for us to observe that whenever the feelings are deeply moved, the intellect is apt to be biassed; the heart deceives the head—the feelings

mislead the judgment. Who has not heard of the prodigious power of prejudice in blinding the understanding?

Now there is no subject fitted to excite deeper or stronger feelings than the subject of Religion. Christianity is no sooner addressed to the Natives of India than it is intensely disliked. We need not now ask the reason of this ; but that such is the fact you are well aware. What is the certain consequence ? The native inquirer listens to the reasonings in favour of Christianity with a mind deeply prejudiced against it. He dislikes Christianity and wishes to think it false. In such circumstances nothing is easier than to convince himself that it is false. "The wish is father to the thought."

Perhaps you may reply that all this is true, but has no application to you. You say you are unprejudiced, and anxious calmly to examine the evidence. Recollect, my young friend, that the most dangerous prejudices are those of which we are unconscious; and that frequently they who boast most loudly of being free from bias are the most hopelessly biassed of any. Free from prejudice you are not. It is foolish to think you can discuss Christianity as coolly as you discuss a question in mechanics or chemistry. All your hopes and fears are alive, and eager to mix in the debate. Against Christianity you have prejudices as an individual—prejudices as a Hindu—and prejudices as a human being.

Be aware, then, of the danger. Cherish above all things a simple love of truth. Do not attend to Christianity, hoping to find it false; but with the earnest wish that you may find out whether it be true or false. Above all things, ask God to assist you in the inquiry. It is a matter of life or death;—seek your Maker's aid. Pray; pray earnestly; pray frequently. Beseech God to remove your ignorance and prejudice; beseech Him to reveal to you the truth.

My young friend, no one is *forced* to believe. Enough

of evidence is given to command his assent, if he will only attend to it;—but, if he do not attend to it, he cannot appreciate its power. Here, as in many things else, there is a similarity between Natural Religion and Christianity. As to the former,—God has given men conscience to be a director and ruler within the mind. If they faithfully listen to its voice, they will know their duty and be strengthened to perform it; but they may drown the voice of conscience and thus darken their understandings and harden their hearts. No man is *forced* to be moral. No man is *forced* to believe even the existence of God. God has supplied proofs—not in such number as to compel a man's belief whether he will or not,—but in sufficient number to convince the sincere inquirer. Even so with Christianity. Her evidence is *sufficient* not *excessive*.—Religion, whether natural or revealed, never loses the character of a moral discipline. Whether we shall obey its commandments, depends on the moral state of the mind; and even so, whether we shall appreciate its evidence, greatly depends on the moral state of the mind. As long as men consciously and wilfully break the commandments, so long will they have doubts respecting the evidence. The ungodly and immoral—the worldly-minded and frivolous—*cannot* rightly believe.

Therefore, my dear friend, look well to the moral health of the spirit within you. Seek to be sincere, earnest, childlike. Continually remember how prone you are to error,—how easily you fall under the power of prejudice. Lean simply on God. Oh that you could pray to Him with tears for help!

Do you feel surprise that I bid you pray with tears? When the films of prejudice and error obscure the mental eye the tears of penitence and love will best purge them away and enable you to see the truth of God's holy word.

My dear young friend,—you cannot long remain a

Hindu. Education is fast dispelling your belief in the religion of your fathers. What then will you become? A Pársí? No. A Musalmán? No. Will you become what is called a Deist—that is, one who maintains that God has not granted any Revelation of Himself—has not spoken to man? We are His children—weak, erring, ignorant, helpless; do you think He has not a father's heart—a father's compassion? Does He not pity us? What, will He coldly leave us to wander on, forlorn and despairing? Surely never! It is, a base slander against His infinite tenderness to say so. Say it not; think it not.

Cheerless will be your lot if you end in mere Deism. All that is true in Deism, Christianity also holds; but she has many blessed and consolatory truths peculiar to herself—truths of which your heart stands in need to direct you in life—to support you in death.*

And death rapidly draws on. Soon you and I must give in our account to God—the just, heart-searching, awfully holy Judge. When summoned to His tribunal, can you meet His piercing eye without trembling? Can you fearlessly look on those thunders which surround Him, and which in a moment may wake to blast you? Can you calmly await the sentence that seals your eternal doom?

My dear young friend, God is not to be trifled with. At His awful judgment-seat I must give account for the spirit in which I write these letters, and you for the spirit in which you read them.

And now, farewell. My earnest prayer to Almighty God is this, that you may be led to believe with all your heart on Christ Jesus, the Saviour of sinners; and that, believing on Him, you may have a peace which the world knoweth not—a peace which the world cannot give—a peace which the world cannot take away.

I am,

Your sincere friend .

* See Appendix E.

APPENDIX.

A.

The Old Testament.

In the preceding Letters we have considered the evidences in support of the Divine origin of the New Testament. But the Bible consists of two parts, the Old Testament and the New. We shall, therefore, now direct our attention for a few moments to the arguments that can be adduced in support of the Divine origin of the Old Testament.

The Divine origin of the New Testament being proved, that of the Old follows by necessary and immediate consequence. For the writers of the New Testament very frequently quote the Old, and invariably quote it not as the word of man, but as the word of God. "All Scripture," says St. Paul, "is given by inspiration of God." "Holy men of God," says St. Peter, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Testimonies of this kind to the Divine authority of the Old Testament are thickly scattered over the pages of the New. Jesus Christ himself, in the most distinct and unequivocal manner, gives his sanction to the Old Testament. He very frequently quotes it as the infallible word of God. He says: "Heaven and Earth shall pass away; but one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Thus, we might commence with the inspiration of the New Testament, and employ its aid to demonstrate the inspiration of the Old,—and this is the order which has been recommended in these "Letters," as on the whole the simpler.

Or, on the other hand, we might commence with the Old Testament, and, from its demonstrated inspiration, establish that of the New. We may now briefly sketch an outline of the argument in support of the antiquity, genuineness and credibility of the Old Testament. But it must be kept in mind that the plan on which this work is written, entirely supersedes the necessity of any full and elaborate inquiry into this subject. Even if we had been so ignorant of the history of the Old Testament that we could not have proved its genuineness and cre-

dibility, apart from the authority of Christ and the Apostles, still that authority would have been perfectly sufficient to establish those points. It is more, then, as a matter of curiosity than as one of importance to the argument, that we here take it up.

1. In the first place, we note the remarkable fact that the Old Testament is in the hands of both Jews and Christians. Christians (forgetting the spirit of the religion they profess) have in former times often cruelly persecuted the Jews; and the Jews have fully repaid all the scorn and bitterness of the Christians. Neither class would have accepted any thing from the other. Yet we find both of them receiving and venerating the same volume. There is no difference between the Old Testament of the Jews and the Old Testament of the Christians.—This fact proves that the Old Testament is at least as ancient as the origin of Christianity, and that it has remained uncorrupted since that date.

2. We have a series of Jewish writings which testify to the antiquity of the Old Testament.

a. There are several versions of and commentaries on the Old Testament, in the Chaldee language, which are more ancient than the origin of Christianity.

b. There are several books written by Jews in the Greek language which testify to the same fact. For example, the book of Ecclesiasticus, which was written about the year 232 before Christ, distinctly specifies the chief books of the Old Testament.

c. There is a celebrated translation of the Old Testament into Greek, composed in Egypt about the year 280 before Christ, and very extensively circulated. It is generally called the Septuagint version. It is a venerable and important work, and forms one most powerful evidence in favour of the antiquity and genuineness of the Old Testament. It brings us very near indeed to the date of the latest books of the Old Testament; for neither Jews nor Christians assign a higher antiquity to these than about the year 420 before Christ.

3. The newest parts, then, of the Old Testament were undeniably written four centuries before Christ. But the very style proves that some parts are very much older than these. The style of the Vedas scarcely differs more from that of the

Purānas, or the style of Chaucer from that of Milton, than the style of the Pentateuch differs from that of the later books.

4. Let us attend particularly to the Pentateuch; for on the determination of its age that of the other books greatly depends. We know that in Palestine there existed two great contemporaneous kingdoms, Judah and Israel. These were generally at enmity with each other. The kings of Israel were very desirous of rendering the religion of their people as distinct as possible from that of Judah. Yet both of these kingdoms acknowledged the same Pentateuch.* Therefore the Pentateuch must be more ancient than the separation of these kingdoms, which took place in the 11th century before Christ.

There is a people known by the name of Samaritans, still existing in the vicinity of Samaria. They are quite distinct from the Jews; and from the first "the Jews have had no dealings with the Samaritans." They acknowledge only the Pentateuch as inspired. Their reception of the Pentateuch and rejection of the later books of the Old Testament proves that either their Pentateuch is a transcript of the Pentateuch which was acknowledged by the Israelites when they separated from Judah—a transcript which has all along been kept independent of the Jewish Pentateuch,—or else that at least it must have been taken from the Jewish not later than the establishment of the Samaritans in Israel (in the 7th century before Christ) and taken from it because the former inhabitants of Israel had acknowledged it. In either case, we are brought to the conclusion that the Pentateuch was acknowledged at the date of the separation of Judah and Israel about 975 years before Christ. This brings us to within 500 years of the date of Moses the author of the Pentateuch. The fact that the Pentateuch was fully acknowledged by the whole nation consisting of Jews and Israelites, and that a most costly and magnificent temple had recently been built by Solomon, the services of which were in all points exactly modelled after the ritual prescribed in the Pentateuch, proves that the Pentateuch must have been considerably more ancient than the time of Solomon.

5. The history of the period that elapsed between Moses

* See a demonstration by Hengstenberg in his work on the Pentateuch, of the fact that the Pentateuch was well known in the kingdom of Israel.

and Solomon is distinctly recorded in the Old Testament, and bears manifold internal marks of probability. So that it is altogether vexatious and unreasonable to dispute the correctness of the age assigned to the Pentateuch.

6. With respect to the credibility of the Old Testament. The history recorded in it is closely connected with that of some of the greatest nations of the Earth, such as the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Syrians, &c. Thus we can test the Bible history by general history. When we do so, we find no contradictions, but innumerable corroborations, of the former supplied by the annals of the nations with which the Jews came in contact. The man who believes the Bible can sincerely rejoice in all the discoveries that are being made in the decyphering of Egyptian hieroglyphics, and Persian and Assyrian Cuneiform inscriptions;—he can sincerely rejoice in the excavation of ancient tombs and cities, and fearlessly confront their evidence with the Bible. All that has yet been discovered only demonstrates, more clearly than before, the firmness of the foundation on which our belief in the Bible history is built. By all means let our Champollions, Rawlinsons, and Layards go on and resuscitate the buried past; the Bible courts full investigation, and calmly waits for the confirming voice of antiquity to be uttered in its support.

B.

Doctrine of the Resurrection.

It is asserted in page 137 that the important doctrine of the *Resurrection of the body* is confined to the Christian Revelation. By the Christian Revelation is here meant the religion contained in the Old and New Testaments. In both of these books the doctrine of the Resurrection is distinctly stated; but to them, and the systems which have been, in whole or in part, drawn from them, the doctrine is confined.

The ancient philosophers of Greece and Rome almost universally held that matter was essentially corruptible and subject to decay, and that no power, not even that of the Deity, could change its fundamental qualities. To be released from

its chains was, therefore, an unspeakable blessing.* All schools of philosophers were thus agreed in denying the resurrection of the body.* Only a very few passages can be found in which some philosophers state its restoration as not an absolute impossibility.

The system of the ancient Egyptians has sometimes been thought to have contained a doctrine somewhat resembling that of the Resurrection. But their belief, as stated by Herodotus, was that of *transmigration*. So long as the body existed, they conceived that the soul continued in some connection with it; but that, when the body perished, the transmigration into the bodies of brutes, birds, &c., commenced. Hence arose the practice of embalming.†

The only religion that can for a moment be supposed to contain the doctrine of the Resurrection, without having derived it from the Bible, is Pársism. But the exception is merely in appearance. The 10th volume of the *Paris Journal Asiatique*‡ contains an elaborate inquiry by M. Burnouf on a phrase in the Zendavesta which had been supposed to assert the doctrine in question. He comes to the conclusion that the phrase contains no reference to the Resurrection. Dr. Spiegel remarks: "M. Burnouf has shown that the older writings of the Zendavesta did not acknowledge the doctrine of the Resurrection.—He has stated that the words *yavaecha yavatataecha* do not signify *till the resurrection*, as Anquetil translates them."§

The Pársi doctrine of the Resurrection comes first prominently forward in the Bundeshne, which is at least as modern as the 7th century after Christ, and which, according to a careful and correct observer—Mr. W. Erskine,—contains "much that is evidently Chaldean and later than the Musulmans."

It would be an interesting, but a difficult, question to determine when the Pársis first received this important doctrine. On the whole they would seem to have borrowed it from the

* Tertullian. See Pearson on the Creed, Art. xi.

† Hengstenberg on the Pentateuch. Vol. ii. p. 464. (Clark's Edit.,)

‡ *Journal Asiatique*, iii Serie, Tome x. 1840. p. 7 &c. 320.

§ *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft*, Band i Heft iii. p. 260.—See some farther remarks on this subject in the *Journal of the Bombay B. R. Asiatic Soc.*, for July 1852, p. 230.

Jews. Its fuller development was probably drawn partly from the Christians and partly from the Muhammadans.

C.

Character of Jesus Christ.

The following is a remarkable passage, occurring in one of the works of the well-known J. J. Rousseau, which deserves to be quoted for its intrinsic truth and beauty, and also because it is found in the writings of an enemy.

"I confess that the majesty of the Scriptures astonishes me—that the holiness of the Gospel speaks to my heart. Observe the books of the philosophers with all their pomp;—how petty they are beside it! Is it possible that a book at once so sublime and so simple is the work of men? Is it possible that he whose history it contains, is himself no more than man? Is this the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his morals! what a touching grace in his instructions! what elevation in his maxims! what profound wisdom in his discourses! what presence of mind, what delicacy and justness in his replies! what command over his passions! Where is the man, where is the sage, who can act, suffer, and die, without weakness and without ostentation? When Plato paints his imaginary just man, covered with the opprobrium of crime, though worthy of all the rewards of virtue, he paints Jesus Christ in every feature. The resemblance is so striking that all the fathers perceived it, and it is not possible to mistake it. What prejudice, what blindness must it be to compare the son of Sophroniscus to the son of Mary! What a distance between them! Socrates, dying without pain and without ignominy, easily maintained his dignity to the last; and if that easy death had not honoured his life, we might have doubted whether Socrates, with all his gifts, was any thing more than a sophist. He invented morality, they say. Others before him had practised it; he only said what they had done; he only expressed their example in words. Leonidas had died for his country, before Socrates had made patriotism a duty. Sparta was sober before Socrates had praised so—

erity ; before he had defined virtue, Greece abounded in virtuous men. But where did Jesus obtain among his people that elevated and pure morality of which he alone has given the precept and example ? From the midst of the wildest fanaticism the loftiest wisdom was heard ; and the simplicity of the most heroic virtues honoured the vilest of all nations. The death of Socrates, tranquilly philosophising with his friends, is the gentlest that one can desire ; that of Jesus expiring in torments, injured, mocked, cursed, by a whole nation, is the most horrible that man can dread. Socrates, taking the poisoned cup, blesses the man who with tears presents it to him ; Jesus in the midst of horrible suffering, prays for his infuriated murderers. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God.”*

D.

Napoleon on Christianity.

Some remarks on Christianity which are attributed to the Emperor Napoleon, are deserving of careful attention. Of their really having been made by Napoleon there can be little doubt ; the external and internal testimony in their favour is strong.†

By whomsoever employed, the words would have been considered weighty, convincing, and in the highest degree suggestive. As uttered by Napoleon they constitute a remarkable testimony in favour of Christianity extorted by the power of truth from an enemy. Napoleon's career was, in numberless things, opposed to the Gospel ; and he must often have been tempted to wish it false. Nevertheless, some of its evidences were too powerful for him to resist ; and what he had the wisdom to perceive, he had also the magnanimity to confess.

* Emile ; Œuvres de J. J. Rousseau, Tome V. p. 98. Edit. 1782.

† The extract has been translated from the Paris journal, entitled *Archives du Christianisme*. We have mislaid the exact reference ; but the passage will be found in one of the issues in the earlier part of the year 1842.

Dr. Bogue, the author of a valuable *Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament*, in which he meets the principal objections which infidels are in the habit of urging against the Christian religion, sent a copy of his work to Napoleon during his residence at St. Helena. The Emperor read the book with interest and pleasure, and if it did not altogether persuade him to acknowledge Jesus Christ as his Saviour, it yet powerfully contributed to dissipate his doubts and to produce a certain degree of conviction. After the death of Napoleon, the same copy became the property of an officer, who had given lessons in English to the family of some of the Emperor's friends. On the return of his regiment to England, this officer presented the volume to Dr. Bogue, who received it with deep emotion, regarding it as a visible token of the favour which God had shewn his labours.

Soon afterwards, the French Abbe Bonavita on quitting Paris to proceed by way of Belgium and England to St. Helena, where he was to act as Chaplain to the Emperor, was brought, while in Belgium, into connexion with an Englishman who was a zealous supporter of the Bible Society. They sailed to London in the same vessel, and frequently met during the Abbe's stay in that city. The Englishman availed himself of the opportunity thus afforded, and presented the Abbe with a beautiful copy of the Bible, with the request that he would offer it to the unhappy exile at St. Helena. The Abbe gratefully accepted it, assuring the giver that Napoleon would set a high value on the present. Such proved to be the fact. Napoleon, as has been declared by trustworthy persons who surrounded his death-bed, diligently read the Holy Scriptures, and in the midst of his sufferings frequently uttered the name of Jesus with much emotion.

He had not, however, waited till the last moment to make his confession before men. In an easy, but serious conversation, he had already exclaimed with that expressive accent and abrupt utterance which had so electric a power, "I know men; and I tell you Jesus is more than man." He continued "His religion is a mystery which subsists independent in itself; it proceeds from an intelligence more than human; we find it marked by a profound individuality which has created a system of expressions and precepts, previously quite unknown. Jesus borrows nothing from our sciences. We ne-

where find an example he could have copied; nor has there been any imitation of his career. He is no philosopher; for his proofs are miracles, and from the very first his followers adored him. Science and philosophy do in fact teach nothing of salvation; but Christ came into the world for the sole purpose of revealing heavenly mysteries and the laws of the soul.

“Alexander, Cesar, Charlemagne, and I, have founded empires; but on what have we supported the creations of our genius? On force. The empire of Jesus is founded on love; and, at this hour, millions of men would die for him. It was not a single day, nor a single battle, that secured the triumph of Christianity. It was a long war, a war of three centuries, commenced by the Apostles and continued by their successors and after-generations of Christians. In that war we see kings and all the powers of earth on one side; on the other I behold no army, but a mysterious power, some men dispersed here and there in every part of the world, who have no other watchword but a common faith in the mysteries of the Cross.

“I die before my time, and my body will be reduced to dust and become the prey of worms. What a gulf of separation between my wretched condition and the eternal kingdom of Christ! He is preached, loved, adored; his kingdom is spreading over all the world. Do you call that dying? Is it not rather living?”

Napoleon here stopped: and then, as General Bertrand made no reply, the Emperor added, “If you cannot see that Jesus Christ is God, I made a mistake when I appointed you a General.”

E.

Death of a Native Student.

At the time when the concluding pages of this work are passing through the press, the mind of the writer is greatly saddened by intelligence he has just received of the sudden death of one of the most talented and interesting Native youths he has ever known, Mr. Mahadurao Moroji, long a pupil and teacher in the Free General Assembly's Institution, Bombay, and recently tutor to His Highness, the Chief of Jámkhandí. The event is rendered peculiarly striking and solemn by the

fact that Māhadurao was the Native youth to whom these Letters were originally addressed. The considerations expressed in the first letter as to the uncertainty of life and the necessity of preparation for death were read by him, and their justice was fully admitted ;—ah ! how little did either the writer or the reader think that such an awfully emphatic confirmation of their truth was soon to be supplied !

Glancing over the retrospect of the last ten or eleven years, the mind of the writer is deeply impressed with sorrow on account of the large number of hopeful Native students in Bombay, who have been cut down in the morning of life. Respecting one of these—the young man who is referred to in page 7—the following notice appeared in the “Native’s Friend” for July 1844.

“ We deeply regret to have to announce that the death of this very promising young Native [Gunput Lukshmun] took place at Tanna on Saturday the 6th July, after a short illness.

The name of this young man has pretty frequently appeared in the pages of the *O. C. Spectator* and *Native’s Friend*. In a good many successive numbers of these publications for 1842, there appeared a long and able essay of his on Domestic Reform in India, which had gained the prize of a gold medal. He was also the most approved candidate in a late competition for a prize, which was proposed to the whole educated youth of Bombay for the best essay on the Caste System. His essay on the latter subject has not been published, but it may perhaps yet appear in our pages. He was, on the whole, the best essay-writer among the Native alumni of the colleges in this Presidency. He was inferior to a good many in extent of historical and scientific knowledge; but he stood high in general mental cultivation, and among the highest in command of English expression.

We deeply regret to lose one who was able and willing to render no unimportant services in the cause of India’s advancement, and whose example would have done not a little to stimulate his young countrymen in their English studies. But our sorrow takes a yet sadder hue when we think of this enlightened young Native hurried into eternity, almost before he had begun to think of the necessity of preparation for it. Gunput Lukshmun had imbibed much of the deistical cast of thought which is naturally produced by a system of education

